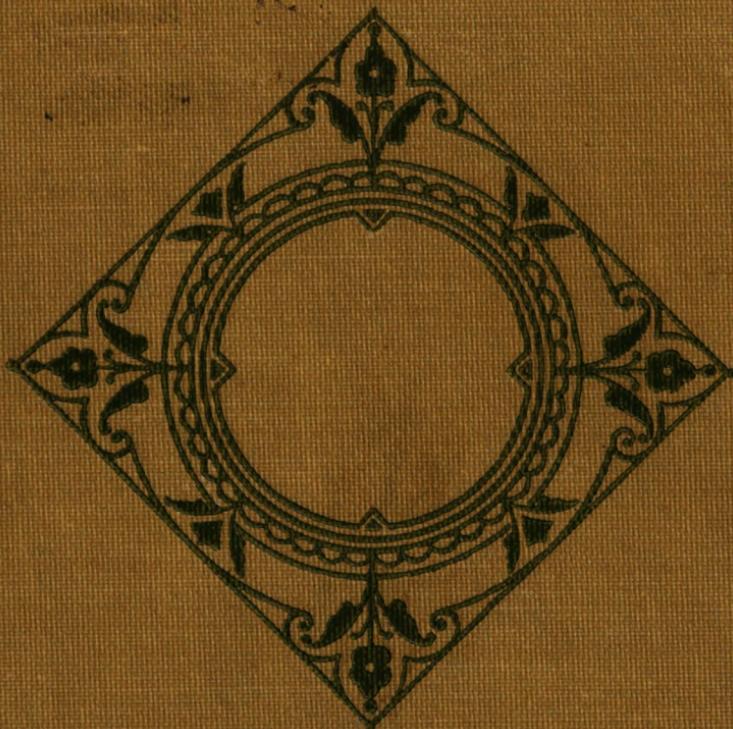

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Alias Kitty Casey



WILLIAMS



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ALIAS KITTY CASEY

A Novel

BY

MARY GERTRUDE WILLIAMS



NEW YORK
P. J. KENEDY & SONS
44 BARCLAY STREET

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. "LIGHT OF ME EYES."	5
II. "DEARIE."	86
III. TONY BALLOU'S TROUBLES MULTIPLY.....	61
IV. ETHEL DAGGETT IS JEALOUS.....	86
V. DOLORES.....	108
VI. ON THE BRIDGE AT SWEETWATER.....	181
VII. JACK SOLVES ALL KATHERINE'S PROBLEMS.....	158

ALIAS KITTY CASEY.

CHAPTER I.

“LIGHT OF ME EYES.”

KATHERINE CAREW leaned wearily against the gate striving hard to get a grip on her nerves. She had a trying ordeal to go through with before she could reach the safe refuge of her room and cry her eyes out in peace. Idly she noted the unkempt look of the lawns and flower-beds after the winter storms; the roses, incased in their protecting wrappings of straw; the flower-pots, mere puddles of mud, adding to the general gloom.

“John will have to make the drive over this spring,” she thought as she dragged herself reluctantly towards

the house. "I believe the motor was harder on it than the carriage used to be."

As she slipped her latchkey into the lock, the gray mist passed across her eyes. The alarming gray mist that had given her so much trouble of late, and finally caused her to consult the eminent oculist Dr. Pau. The same gray mist that she was to carry with her for the rest of her life, according to that specialist, only a deepening mist as time passed until finally—Katherine sobbed aloud.

"I'll not be blind. I'll not!" she gasped. "I'd die sooner." Hastily she opened the door and hurried across the reception hall to the library.

"Howdy, folks," she said gaily, with a great effort controlling the catch in her voice. "Howdy, all. Am I late?"

A warm greeting rose from all quarters of the room.

"Oh, Aunt Kit." A bright soprano voice cried, easily making itself heard above all the others. "Just listen to Bobby's brogue. It's divine. Let me take your wraps. Now say something, Bobby," she commanded. Bobby, a great over-grown boy of twenty-one laughed hilariously.

"Oh, I say, you know. But, Miss Carew, I am improving. Listen—"

"Bobby's been studying with a sweet little Irish girl, Aunt Kit—" Tottie continued eagerly. Katherine Carew raised her hand in protest.

"Please. Please. One at a time." She pleaded. "Now, Bobby, tell me all about it."

"My dear Kit where have you been? Why didn't you take a cab?" A tall, worldly-looking woman, with a persistent smile curving the corners of

her cold mouth, exclaimed with annoyance, as she moved slowly forward. "Look at your skirt, and your shoes are ruined."

"So they are." Katherine replied, turning from her sister-in-law with a rueful glance at her bedraggled clothes. "I will go to my room and change. But tell me first, Tottie, what mischief has Bobby been getting into now?" Tottie laughed as she twined her arms lovingly around her Aunt's waist.

"It's so interesting," she answered gaily. "You know this wonderful dramatic club of ours," waving a comprehensive gesture around the room which included all the boys' and girls' smiling faces, "has chosen a sweet play for our last performance this year. Well Bobby thinks his part calls for a brogue accent. So he met—found—what was it, Bobby?"

“Picked up!” Bobby’s cousin muttered under her breath so low that she could not be heard by any other member of the club.

“Discovered.” Bobby replied with brilliant inspiration.

“Yes,” Tottie agreed. “Discovered the sweetest little Irish girl. And she is giving him lessons in the real brogue. And as she has only been away from Ireland two months she must remember it real well. And Bobby has named her ‘Light of me eyes’. Isn’t that poetic? But Bobby says her eyes really are wonderful.”

“And Kit,” Bobby interrupted, “she thinks I am a waiter in a swell hotel because I wear evening clothes sometimes when she sees me—”

“Who is she? Why didn’t you bring her here?” Katherine said curiously. “Any friend of yours,

Bobby, is always welcome." The boy blushed scarlet.

"Well, you see, Kit," he stammered, "she—well—she isn't exactly a friend. We met under odd circumstances, in fact I pulled her from in front of an automobile, and—"

"But who is she?" Mrs. Carew asked, with slightly raised eyebrows. "You must know something about her." Bobby fidgeted uncomfortably.

"I'll tell you," Eva Stone cried eagerly, with a malicious laugh. "This paragon of Bobby's is—a maid. Yes, truly. She works for—Now can you guess? For us. She's a relation of your Delia's, Mrs. Carew. You recommended her to mother, don't you remember? She is just an ordinary Irish girl, with a fearful brogue, and—" Bobby's face had been growing redder and redder. "—and she is awfully in love with the fine waiter

who saved her life. And one night when she met Bobby coming down from the organ loft at church after he had sung a solo, she asked him what he was doing up there and he said——”

“By cricky that was funny,” Bobby interposed. “I told her I was pumping the organ for the extra money. She’s strong on saving money, and often asks me how much I am making on tips.” A burst of merriment greeted this confession of the spendthrift Bobby, and enabled Katherine to make her escape from the room. Her sister-in-law followed closely after her.

“Kit,” she called, “will you see to the salad please, and Kit, do try and make Delia understand she must not be so awkward. I don’t suppose anyone was ever bothered with such inefficient servants, I don’t see why John does not allow me money

enough so I can—" Katherine hurried round the curve of the stairs to avoid the rest. She knew it by heart. Money, money, was always her sister-in-law's cry. With a thankful heart she turned the key in her door and started to remove her wet clothes.

"I may as well dress for dinner, then I will rest and think," she said as she carefully laid her chiffon frock out on the bed. "No more dresses like this," she said soberly, smoothing the fluffy folds. "I wonder how much money I really have. I can work no more with these eyes. I cannot stay here and keep on paying Dorothy the enormous sum I do now for board; and I cannot stay and not pay board. That is out of the question. Let me see. I have about two thousand dollars. How long will that last? Board in the country must be cheap. Say ten dollars a week. Ten

into two thousand goes two hundred weeks, or four years. Counting some out for clothes, unless something extraordinary happens I can live independently for over three years. After that—stop—stop—Katherine—you cannot cry—Dr. Pau forbade it—you must laugh—laugh—" And sobbing hysterically she threw herself on the bed entirely forgetful of her dainty gown and wept piteously. Delia's solicitous voice aroused her.

"Indeed, Miss," Delia said with a sniff, "I couldn't stand hearing you and made bold to come in by way of Master Roy's school-room." Katherine sat up in bed and pushed the hair from her eyes.

"Don't mention this to anyone, Delia, please," she said anxiously. "I haven't been well. My nerves. The doctor says I must take a long rest. Go off in the country and board

at a quiet farmhouse," she added trying hard to swallow the lump in her throat which threatened to choke her.

Delia wept a gentle tear of comfort as she helped Katherine remove the traces of tears.

"Sure, Miss, I'll start a novena to St. Anthony to-night," she said fervently. "He's the grand saint to get you back your health."

"Thank you, Delia," Katherine replied weakly, with an oddly uncomfortable feeling. "You are very kind." When she was alone again she glanced curiously at the copy of a world-famous Madonna which hung in an artistic light on her wall.

"I suppose I should pray for myself," she said with a puzzled frown. "But somehow I've gotten out of the habit. Well, I don't suppose it would help much even if I did."

The evening passed in a daze for Katherine. With a grateful heart she bade good-bye to the last member of the Dramatic Club; and, in the absence of her brother, went the rounds with Jennie, carefully locking the house up for the night. She had undressed and was sitting in front of the fast dying fire in her own room when the side door bell rang again and again. Hastily she ran down the stairs so the noise would not waken the rest in the house. The library windows jutted out and afforded a full view of the side porch. There huddled against the terrace, was the figure of a woman. Katherine drew open one of the long windows.

“What is it ?” she asked, anxiously.

“It’s me, ma’am.” A tearful voice replied. “To see Dalia, av ye plaise, ma’am.”

Wonderingly Katherine went round

and opened the door. The girl crept inside.

“Is anything wrong? Is it bad news?” Katherine asked with visions of a houseful of hysterical maids before her. “Who are you?”

“I’m Kittie, Kittie Casey, ma’am.” The girl faltered between her sobs. “Dalia’s cousin, ma’am.”

“Then Kittie you must control yourself.” Katherine said sharply. “Now stop crying or I won’t let you see Delia at all.”

“Och, sure, Miss, and you’d not be after doin’ that,” she cried wildly. “Delia’ll keep me the night.”

“But you must go home. The people you are working for will not like it if you stay out all night,” Katherine remonstrated. “I will call Delia.” Turning on the lights in the morning room Katherine left the girl crouched in a chair and hastened to

Delia's room. The first knock on the door brought Delia in her nightgown to answer it.

"Miss Katherine," she said in awe. "And I'm just after saying your novena."

"Kittie Casey is downstairs," Katherine said. "It is very late so don't let her stay long. I will wait in the library to chain the door after she goes."

The voices of the two girls came fitfully across the hall to Katherine in the library. She was so tired, so very tired. Would she never be alone and quiet. Delia was extremely thoughtless. Impatiently Katherine moved toward the morning room. "I really must give her a hint to go. She will hardly get home before midnight," she said sharply. "I don't know whether it is safe for her to be out so late. Perhaps I had better telephone

to Eva and tell her Kittie is going to stay all night. I will not have it on my conscience to let that pretty little thing out on the streets as late as this."

To think was to act with Katherine Carew. Central had some difficulty in rousing the Stone's house, but finally Eva's sleepy voice came crossly over the wire.

"Oh, is it you, Kit? What's the matter?" she asked ungraciously. Briefly Katherine explained about Kittie. Eva laughed her sneering little giggle.

"Is that where she is? She rushed out in such a fit. I wondered where she went," she said.

"What ails her?" Katherine asked curiously. Eva laughed again.

"Why, as soon as I got home, I told her about Bobby. At first she wouldn't believe me, but when I

showed her his picture she—"Angrily Katherine slammed the receiver up on the hook.

"The cat!" she said bitterly. "She was jealous. Delia," opening the morning room door, "I've telephoned Mrs. Stone that Kittie will stay here to-night. Take her to your room and don't talk loud enough to disturb the other girls. Good-night."

Mechanically Katherine chained the side door and turning out the lights returned to her own room. She was hardly settled in her old chair by the fire before Delia's knock interrupted her brooding.

"If you please, Miss, Kittie's fainted," she announced wildly. "Part way up the back stairs."

With her usual promptness Katherine snatched the spirits of ammonia from the medicine chest and followed Delia to the rear of the house. It was

a stubborn fainting spell and before Kittie opened her wondering eyes on a weary world, the cook and the other two maids in various stages of undress, had joined the group on the back stairs. Amongst them they carried the girl into Katherine's room and put her to bed. Then reluctantly, though half dead with sleep, they left her to Katherine's care.

"Go to sleep if you can, Kittie," she said kindly. "I am going to sit here for a while and think. When I am tired I will go to bed on the couch. If you want anything call me."

Obediently Kittie closed her eyes and lay quiet. Gradually Katherine forgot her as her thoughts wandered back to that awful hour in Dr. Pau's office. The mist was thick to-night, that was because she was tired. She could not see the bed. Perhaps Dr. Pau was wrong and the blindness

would not be a matter of years, but come suddenly and leave her alone in the dark without a moment's warning. Perhaps——

"My God," she cried, "I cannot see. I am blind—Blind!" Wildly Kittie sprang from the bed and shook Katherine awake.

"Oh, Kittie," she sobbed, "such a horrible nightmare." The girl patted her hands and soothed her.

"It's mornin', ma'am," she said. "I'm ashamed av the trouble I've been after makin'——"

"Do you want to go back to Mrs. Stone's?" Katherine asked kindly. The girl shook her head. "Then stay here with me," Katherine suggested. "You must be careful and not repeat anything I say in my sleep. I will be glad to have you. I do not want to be alone for a few days."

With pitiful eagerness Kittie

agreed. She too did not want to be alone.

At breakfast Katherine told the family about the blindness hanging over her. Her brother, who had returned early in the morning, shook his head.

“As bad as that, Kit?” he said gravely, “Dr. Pau is an extremist. Better consult Oxford. He always looks on the bright side. You will miss your work at the office at first. What will Travers do without you? His brains he always calls you.”

Tottie was staring with horror at Katherine, her big blue eyes so like her Aunt’s, brimming with tears.

“Dear me, Kit, you should have married,” Mrs. Carew exclaimed discontentedly. “Now nobody’ll want you—unless—Kit, we’ll keep this quite to ourselves—and Alfred Carroll is about ready to propose, or Jack

Ballou— Why, John, what ails Kit?" But Katherine had fled from the room before she should lose her self-control and give her sister-in-law a sharp answer. Kittie met her in the hall.

"Av ye plaise, ma'am," she said eagerly, "Dalia says Mister Ballou is yer gentleman friend."

"Yes?" Katherine asked wearily.

"Mister Ballou the hotel man." Kittie continued eagerly. "Wud ye be after askin' him for a job for me in his foine hotel up in the country."

"Certainly, Kittie." Katherine replied kindly. "Only my Mr. Ballou is a brother of the hotel man. Wait. I will write to him now." Patiently Kittie waited while Katherine, with an aching heart, wrote the desired letter. She explained Kittie's pitiful little story quite fully. "Jack's brother must be a man of under-

standing." She said to herself, "and he certainly has heard Jack speak of me, so of course he will help Kittie if he can."

Within three days the desired answer arrived from New York. Mr. Tony Ballou was very glad to do any favor for his brother's friend, and enclosed a contract for Kittie as chambermaid, and a transportation ticket to his "Foine hotel beyant." Kittie was to report for duty early in June.

"That gives you nearly two months to make your clothes in," Katherine said when she read the letter to Kittie. "Delia will help you, she worked for a dressmaker once." Kittie was very grateful and started her wardrobe immediately. At first Mrs. Carew mildly objected to Kittie's staying at the house, but Katherine's quiet, "I need her," was sufficient. Mrs. Carew was a trifle afraid of this

new, strange, self-possessed sister-in-law, so unlike the old buoyant cheery girl who had been the life of her home.

So a month passed. Then Mr. Carew came home one night with a radiant face.

“Pack up everybody!” He called gaily. We sail for Europe in six days to be gone all summer. Business and pleasure combined.”

“What!” Mrs. Carew gasped. “John, you are joking. You did get that case after all.”

Tottie was jumping up and down for joy. Roy had run to his father and was trying to climb up his back to attract his undivided attention. Katherine alone did not share the general enthusiasm.

“Well, Kit?” her brother said pinching her cheek. “Will you be ready?” Katherine shook her head.

"I'd love to go, of course, John, but—the quiet of the country will be better for me." She replied positively. Long they pleaded with her but to no avail. To get away among strangers and hide herself had become an obsession with the generally level-headed Katherine Carew. She wanted to be alone when the darkness came. Pity she could not stand. She had always been so self-reliant, now to be dependent on others for everything galled her inexpressibly.

It was a distracted household for the next few days. Katherine had offered to close the house, discharge the servants, and settle everything after the folks left, and Mrs. Carew gratefully accepted. She was not sorry Katherine had decided not to accompany them. If she really became blind she would be a dreadful care and expense. If she had only

married, or gone into a sisterhood or been settled before her misfortune had overtaken her. Mrs. Carew felt personally aggrieved. And the expense. Who was going to stand it? John, of course, he was always so foolish about money.

Tottie, in her intensely childish way was heartbroken at being separated from her Aunt, but the joys ahead quickly took her mind off her grieving.

John Carew after a few perfunctory words of sympathy and an equally perfunctory offer of money, had with some relief dismissed the subject from his mind. "Kit always could take care of herself," he said. "Always knew what she wanted. Dr. Pau is an extremist. Time enough in the fall if Katherine is no better, to really worry."

Kitty Casey was to stay with Kath-

erine until the house was settled ; the servants leaving the day after the family. It was a lonely house, but the two girls,—one the uneducated, untrained product of the old country ; the other the over-educated, over-trained product of the new ; but both with aching hearts longing for quiet ; welcomed the absence of the others with equal gratitude.

Kittie was fast finishing her clothes for the summer. Katherine bought no new clothes. The simplest of the frocks she had were good enough for a farmhouse.

It was two weeks before the date Kittie was to start for Peaceful Valley when she asked permission to go to church for nine nights to make a novena to the Sacred Heart to end on June 3rd. The first night Katherine let her go alone, but the second night she joined her.

"I have forgotten how to pray, Kittie," she said humbly. "You will have to teach me."

Night after night as Katherine lay awake gloomily brooding on her future she could hear sobs from the next room and knew that Kittie Casey was grieving her heart out for her lost sweetheart. The world was very full of woes for both it seemed.

The day the novena finished Kittie came to Katherine Carew.

"Miss Katherine," she said sadly, "I want to go home, to the ould country, me heart's achin' for the blue skies and green fields—"

"But you will have blue skies and green fields at Peaceful Valley," Katherine interrupted. "You have signed your contract, your clothes are all ready—"

"It's the price of the passage, Miss, that's botherin' me," Kittie continued

with a wistful smile. "I spent me money on me bits av duds."

All day Katherine reasoned with the girl but to no avail. Home was all she wanted. Finally, much to her own surprise, Katherine consulted Father Hume at the rectory. He listened to the story in silence then answered briefly :

"If in your charity you can spare the money, send the child home. There is no balm like home for an aching heart."

As Katherine came back to the house after seeing Kittie aboard the Cunarder on her way to the land of blue skies and green fields of her dreams, she sighed :

"Poor 'Light of me eyes,' Bobby's thoughtlessness did indeed turn into a tragedy. I wonder if you will learn to forget and love another. I suppose so."

Slowly Katherine went from room to room, closing each door behind her with a pang. Would she ever see them again? Probably not. Long before the house would be reopened in the fall the mists would have come to stay.

On the dresser in her room she found a letter from Kittie. Such a quaint little letter, all daubs and tears. With it was the transportation ticket from Mr. Ballou. The long green ticket made Katherine regret for a moment the money she had spent for that other ticket on the steamer.

"My money goes so fast," she said wistfully as she tried to read Kittie's incoherent sprawl. When she finished she laughed through her tears. Her first laugh for weeks. "What an idea," she gasped. "Poor silly Kittie."

But the letter, according to Kittie's ideas, was not silly; only a very good

way out of a difficult position. For in gratitude to Katherine for her kindness to her, Kittie offered Katherine her place at the hotel, her transportation ticket, and her wardrobe made with many an hour's work.

In some way she had guessed Katherine's fears as her money went rapidly, and suggested in her simple way that if Katherine went to the hotel, she would not have to pay board, the tips would be a help, and the work and the guests amusing. It was hotel work from Kittie's point of view.

Katherine laughed, then sighed, then grew thoughtful. Could it be possible that this was the answer to her novena? She had prayed for independence. For work, any honorable work, that would not tire her eyes. Certainly Kittie's offer filled all these conditions. But a chamber-

maid—Katherine Carew a chamber-maid. The thought was impossible.

Her mind wandered to the little country hamlet, the farmhouse she had chosen for her hiding-place for the summer and she shuddered. Nobody knew, except her brother's partner where she was going. Nobody would care—nobody but Jack Ballou—and she had purposely quarrelled with him. He was the last one she could stand pity from. Hastily she dropped the letter and ticket into her desk and shut it tight.

"I believe it is a temptation," Katherine said angrily. "I must finish my packing." Carefully she laid Kittie's clothes away. As she worked her eyes wandered restlessly back to her closed desk. With a wistful smile she took Kittie's letter out and read it through again. The long green ticket fascinated her. She

tried to think, to pray, but the words refused to come. Suddenly she threw them both from her.

“I’ll toss a coin to decide.” She said desperately, “No—if the clothes fit me I’ll go.” She added with decision. “I’ve trained Dorothy’s maids for years—the duties should come easy.”

With trembling hands she drew the simple nurse’s stripe dress over her head and buttoned it.

“Does it fit? Isn’t it a bit loose? Doesn’t it pucker?” she asked herself anxiously as she skillfully smoothed the wrinkles down. With beating heart Katherine gazed at the trim figure reflected back from the long cheval glass. To all but the most critical eyes the dress was a perfect fit.

“Good luck to you, Kittie Casey,” she said with a sob, “And good-bye

to Katherine Carew, for it's the last time I will ever set eyes on you. Good luck and the top of the mornin' to ye, acushla!"

CHAPTER II.

“DEARIE.”

TIRED and dusty from her long ride in the train Katherine Carew stood on the little station platform at Peaceful Valley breathing deep of the wonderful mountain air. It was a beautiful place as seen that June afternoon; the fresh green of the trees; the soft deep blue of the skies; the fleecy white clouds, toning from dove to gray, sailing lazily across from mountain range; and over all the glorious golden sunshine. She laughed softly as she gazed down the valley to the hotel at its further end.

“My kingdom,” she said, with a whimsical smile in the direction of its numerous detached cottages. “I

wonder how many of those I am to be chambermaid for?" At that point in her reverie she was interrupted by a tall, lanky bellboy.

"Say, are you Kittie Casey?" He asked with an air of importance. "I've got the rest on the list." Pointing to a group of girls at the end of the station. Katherine Carew smiled up at his bright boyish face.

"Yes." She answered as she passed him her bag. He hesitated a moment, laughed, then took the bag from her hand.

"Say," he remarked with a friendly grin. "You've never worked in a hotel before. Have you?" Katherine blushed. She felt frightened. Could it be possible the boy knew her? Peter chuckled at her scared face.

"Oh, that's all right." He hastened to reassure her. "There are lots of greenhorns up here. It's only South

we have all old hands." Skillfully Peter herded the girls, some ten in number, into the old style stage coach, and climbed up beside the driver.

"Home, James," he announced, to that old veteran's immense amusement. "And for the love of Mike, Jay, don't tip us over."

Jay cracked his whip; the stage started with a jerk; one or two timid girls shrieked as they found themselves precipitated into their neighbors' arms; Peter and Jay roared with delight; and they rattled away down the road.

Katherine gave a sharp glance of scrutiny at each of the girls. All were strangers to her. Most of them looked tired, and some of them cross. And these would be her companions; yes, friends even for nearly four months. She shivered and glanced out of the window. The mist was so

thick before her eyes she could not see the trees by the roadside. The darkness certainly was coming fast. With a sob she clenched her hands. The girl opposite reached over and gave her a friendly pat.

"Oh, go on, brace up!" she said kindly. "We all feel like that our first season up here, for a couple of weeks, but then we get so stuck on the place we always come back. I'm here ten years," she concluded proudly. Katherine Carew turned quickly round, trying bravely to smile.

"The work here is pleasant?" she asked eagerly. The girl laughed.

"It's pleasant all right—but, Gee, we do work," she said with a shrug of her plump shoulders.

With a noisy rattle of brakes the coach drew up at the hotel door. Peter swung quickly down, opened

the door with a flourish, and bowing low in mock politeness, cried :

“ All out, ladies. End of the route. This way to the big show.”

Without any delay the girls scrambled out. Katherine stepped to one side and let them precede her into the hotel. Peter walked beside with her bag. Then she noticed all the other girls were carrying their own bags, and realized why Peter had laughed at her. He thought she was trying to put on airs. In the lobby of the hotel they were met by the house-keeper and Manager who greeted them kindly. As Katherine looked at Tony Ballou a wave of homesickness nearly overcame her.

“ He is like my Jack, a little.” She thought. “ Only not so nice, of course.”

The housekeeper, a motherly looking woman with beautiful gray hair,

and a kindly way of patting the girls on the shoulders, which appeared to be appreciated, gathering as many of their bags and bundles in her arms as she could possible carry, swept her little coterie of followers up the stairs and over to the wing provided for the helps' quarters. As they passed a room at the end of the hall Katherine was disturbed to hear a child's voice wailing pitifully.

"I want's my Tom. I'm afraid! I'm afraid." The shrill treble voice gradually increasing in intensity. The housekeeper gave an exclamation of resigned despair, and called back to the Linen Room :

"Some one go to that child. She's awake again."

Vaguely Katherine wondered whose child it was. Not the housekeeper's apparently, from her seeming lack of sympathy with it.

To Katherine's relief she found she would have a room to herself for a while. Until the rest of the force arrived rooms were plentiful.

"Rest until supper time." The house-keeper recommended. And Katherine was grateful to bathe her face and hands and freshen herself after her long journey. Then with her trunk check in her hand she sallied forth in search of a porter. Peter was the first person she met as she crossed over into the hotel. He took the check promising to look the trunk up for her.

As she reached the Linen Room she could hear the baby's cries again. There she stood, a forlorn little figure in the group of girls, all of whom were vainly trying to comfort her. As Katherine entered the Linen Room by one door, Mr. Ballou entered by the other.

"Can't anybody do anything with, her?" he asked angrily. "You are a great lot 'of women." At the first sound of his voice the child stopped crying and wildly held her arms out to him.

"Afraid. I'm afraid!" she gasped. Tony Ballou stooped and took her up in his arms.

"Come. Tom play horsie," he said gently. The baby grasped him tightly round the neck, still sobbing now and again.

"Queer. Some of you ought to know how to handle a kid." The Manager said testily. "Aren't any of you married women? Grace, you're a grandmother—what ails you?" The girls looked sheepishly at one another. "How am I going to do my work?" he continued, "with this in my arms all the time?" While he was speaking, for all his pretended anger, he

was gently smoothing the child's soft gold curls. "My little mascot hasn't commenced to exert her charm yet," he said ruefully to the housekeeper. "Everything is going wrong. Just received a wire that Miss Carr, my stenographer, is sick and can't be up until next week. Think of all the letters I'll have to write by hand."

"Perhaps one of my girls is a typewriter," Mrs. Wood, the housekeeper, suggested hopefully. All the girls kept silent.

"No such luck," Mr. Ballou replied, shifting the little head over to his other shoulder. "She's asleep—perhaps—" But the first motion to unfasten her hands from his coat collar wakened the child and started her sobbing again.

"That settles it," Mr. Ballou said firmly. "I've got to keep her

all right." Hesitatingly Katherine moved forward.

"If it's only for a week," she said slowly, "and not too much work, I can manage."

"Kittie Casey, you're a jewel," the Manager cried, beaming with delight. "Come down to my office at once." Until dusk Katherine worked steadily. She surprised and perplexed the harassed man. Such a stenographer he had never had since he became Manager. What in the world was the girl doing chamberwork for?

"Who did you get your position up here through?" he asked curiously.

"You hired me," Katherine replied meekly.

"Did I?" he replied more mystified than ever. "If so, I must have been in a trance when it happened, not to remember you." Katherine laughed gravely.

"Won't you come to me while Mr. Ballou signs his letters, Baby?" she coaxed the child. The wistful little face turned toward Katherine.

"'Fraid!" she whispered. Katherine took one of the tiny hands in hers.

"See," she said brightly, as she curled each rosebud finger up close, "All the little fairy birdies are going to sleep." Then with one motion of her thumb she uncurled all the fingers at once. "Now, they all wake up and fly away. Look, pretty."

"Fairy birdies!" The baby laughed joyfully, trying hard to curl her fingers as Katherine had done.

"Look." Katherine commanded, gently.

"She can't," Mr. Ballou interrupted sharply. "She's—she's blind."

"What?" Katherine gasped with horror, "No! No—not that!" Ten-

derly she took the little face between her hands and gazed into the big vacant brown eyes. "The pity of it ! The pity of it !" She half sobbed, as the mist dropped across her own eyes, shutting the baby face out. The childish form stiffened.

"Muvver ! Muvver !" She cried with delight, flinging herself onto Katherine's neck. "My own pretty Muvver—and Tom go away—and man's come—and go Choo Choo—and Tom say Baby cross—and—" Katherine held her close stopping the incoherent words with her kisses. Tony Ballou leaned back in his chair staring in amazement at the two in front of him.

"Is she yours ?" he asked curiously.

"Gracious no." Katherine returned. "Isn't she yours ?"

"Certainly not," Tony Ballou answered quickly. "I'll tell you about

it. I was in the Grand Central Station, New York, waiting for a belated train. I was tired so went into the waiting-room and settled for a cat-nap. Beside me was Dearie, here, and a man. He was a hollow-eyed wreck, but very careful of the baby. She was calling continually for 'Muvver', and the man tried to quiet her but with poor success. Finally she fell asleep.

I had been watching them for want of something else to do. In return the man stared some at me. A chap I knew stopped on his way to his train and greeted me by my full name. This seemed to rouse my neighbor, for a little later he asked,

"Are you Ballou the hotel man?" I said, Yes."

"And married?" No, but hope to be sometime, I answered. He sighed, kissing the child, and said,

"She is blind. It killed her mother."

Well, I pitied the poor fellow, and when presently he asked me to hold the child while he made inquiries about his train, I fell for it. Well, don't you see? He never came back. I tried to turn the baby over to the police, but she had taken a fancy to me—called me Tom. I took a notion to bring her up as a mascot—"He laughed boyishly, and even blushed. "You see she's the first person in the world to find me absolutely necessary—it tickles my vanity—I like it." Katherine laughed sympathetically.

"She is a dear," she said softly. "It must be long past her bedtime." Tony Ballou grew grave immediately.

"Do you take her, or I?" He asked nervously. "I've had her two nights. I'm afraid—say you try her

for to-night. If she cries, of course—" Katherine stood the baby on her feet.

"Say good-night to Tom," she commanded gaily, "and come with Muvver until we find the land of warm, sweet, bread and milk, and sugar cookies." Quite readily the child obeyed.

At the doorway Katherine turned and glanced over her shoulder at the Manager. His face was such a mixture of relief, and disappointment at the fickleness of his youthful love, that Katherine laughed. In childish sympathy the baby echoed her mirth.

"You were not original or interesting enough to hold her, Mr. Ballou," she said, mischievously, "You lack imagination."

A short half hour later Peter arrived from Katherine with a request for Mr. Ballou's presence in Dearie's room. Hastily he ran up the stairs.

Could the child be ill? Katherine opened the door with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Dearie declines to say her prayers to anybody but Tom," she said demurely. "I hope you know the ones she says." The Manager blushed scarlet.

"She is a Catholic, all right—has a medal on her neck," he stammered, "I'm a Catholic too, at least a sort of a one," Katherine nodded.

"It is easy to pray," she said sadly. "But so hard to learn again." she added turning away to the window.

"Tom say prayers with Dearie," the child said as Tony Ballou seated himself on the bed beside her, where she knelt, a prim little figure with meekly folded hands. "Tom put arms round Dearie." She commanded. Humbly Tony Ballou obeyed, and lis-

tened with a feeling of intruding in a holy place, while Dearie stumbled through her simple devotions.

From her place, at the window, Katherine followed the broken words.

“Dear God, teach me to pray!” She begged earnestly as the gray mists grew thick. “Teach me to pray!”

As Tony Ballou rolled into bed that night, without fears of crushing a tiny mite at the farther side, he breathed a prayer of thanksgiving.

“She’s a fine girl, that Kittie Casey,” he said to himself. “Wish I could remember—I have it—she’s the girl Jack’s friend Miss Carew wrote about. What was the story? Something about a fellow throwing her over. The sublime chump. I’ll hunt that letter up to-morrow and read it again.

The next day he was too busy to

remember, and before he did think of it, Katherine Carew had confiscated the letter from the file marked "References." That letter was the only bit of evidence to prove that she was not Kitty Casey. One sentence she had written lingered in her memory, namely: "Kittie is a pretty girl and taking but she has a marked brogue." Needless to say the sooner that letter was destroyed the better; for Katherine Carew knew she could not talk brogue.

It proved a very busy day for Katherine. The office work came easy to her, of course, but trying to keep Dearie happy and quiet was a task. Tony Ballou admired Katherine deeply before the day was over. The wonderful tact which could throw a word to the child at exactly the right moment, and still not interfere with his work, deserved a compliment, and

right willingly he gave it. Katherine blushed to her eyes.

“He is like my Jack,” she thought.
“Indeed he is.”

One thing Katherine escaped by helping in the office; that was the heavy cleaning, washing of paint, etc. She was very grateful, as with Dearie by her side, she watched the line of girls leaving the Linen Room. Her cottages would be cleaned for her the housekeeper promised; and she was far from sorry to miss this first chance to test her ability as a scrub-lady.

What a tremendous amount of work there was in a hotel to be sure. Everything washable was scrubbed and re-scrubbed. Everything shinable polished and re-polished. The vacuum cleaner commenced the good work; the floor men with heavy polishers and wax ended it; while in be-

tween moved a motley array of tired girls, with brooms and pails of water; painters; carpenters; plumbers; porters; bellboys, with liquid that smelled to heaven, and big strips of leather, and aching arms; and around and through it all the houseman and his helper shifting beds and mattresses and sundry furniture; the whole parade being punctuated at intervals by the housekeeper, growing more and more flurried as the days passed and chaos still reigned, while from his post at the helm, the master-hand and eye of the Manager steered his troubled bark, with its weary crew, into the quiet waters of a smoothly moving establishment.

Early the next morning Peter came to Katherine.

"Your trunk's here and there's seventy cents due for storage 'cause it wasn't checked right," he said.

Katherine opened her bag to get her pocketbook. It was gone. Some one had been in her room. Or could Peter have taken it while he had the bag on the stage coach? No, never. But who could have taken it then? Peter whistled as he waited.

"I've lost my money," Katherine said, nervously. "Peter, can you lend me seventy cents?" Peter laughed.

"I ain't got it," he answered, cheerfully. "But—wait, I'll borrow it off some one." With a worried mind Katherine reported for work. At noon she met Peter. He was frowning deeply.

"The Boss won't let me have a dollar unless I tell him what I want it for," he said angrily. "You wait though, I'll get it before night."

In the late afternoon he came to Katherine with a dollar. As soon as she opened her trunk she repaid him,

and supposed that ended the matter, but instead that was only the beginning.

The next day before work Mr. Ballou gathered all the help together and warned them that one of their number was a thief, various sums of money having been reported as missing. With one accord they cast suspicious looks, each at his or her neighbor. Katherine's heart stood still. Was that how Peter had obtained the dollar?

"A bill was taken from my desk, even," the Manager continued. "So all of you had better take precautions. When I discover the thief I will tell you all publicly who it is, rest assured," he concluded angrily.

All the morning Katherine worked with a plan gradually taking shape in her brain. If Peter had taken the money from Mr. Ballou's desk for

her ; then she must smuggle it back for him. That afternoon she tucked a one dollar bill up her sleeve, and at a moment when Tony Ballou turned to speak to Dearie she slipped it under a pile of letters on his desk. All she needed now was to bring the conversation round to the thefts, which proved easy.

“ Perhaps you mislaid the money,” she suggested. “ There is a lot of stuff on your desk. We might look through it.” The Manager readily agreed, and carefully shook the papers as he sorted them out. With an exclamation of surprise he discovered the dollar bill. For a minute he sat quietly pinching his chin and gazing at it. Taking it up and turning it over he glanced sharply at Katherine. She was busy with Dearie.

“ Curious,” he said slowly. “ This is a one dollar bill—I lost a five.”

Katherine gasped in dismay. What an awful mistake she had made. How could she have doubted Peter for a moment? After she had hurried away with Dearie, Tony Ballou sat for a time in deep thought.

"Another mystery!" He said, the furrows deepening between his frowning eyes. "How I hate mysteries. I wonder—does Kittie Casey know? Where is that letter from Miss Carew?" With rapidly increasing anger he searched the letter file. The letter also was missing. "That settles it, Kittie Casey," he said with set jaws, "even if Dearie does love you. I believe she is that child's mother. Leaving the kid with me was a blind to hoodwink me. She is certainly out of her class. Chambermaid, indeed—she is a crook. Miss Carew is honest. Let me see, Jack met the real Kittie. This girl's a fake. I'll

write him to come up—that's it—and until then Kittie Casey," with deep scorn, "shall be watched every minute night and day."

CHAPTER III.

TONY BALLOU'S TROUBLES MULTIPLY.

BEFORE Tony Ballou could find an opportunity to write the letter asking his brother to come to Peaceful Valley and identify Kittie Casey many things happened.

After putting Dearie to bed Katherine Carew returned to his office to finish her work. She knew she was using her eyes too much, but the stenographer, Miss Carr, had sent word she would report for duty the following morning, and Katherine Carew wished to leave everything in good shape for her successor. She was surprised to find two men in earnest conversation with the Manager, but as he made no motion for her

to go away, she seated herself at her machine and commenced to work. She could feel Tony Ballou's eyes upon her and it made her vaguely uncomfortable. As soon as the men left the office he turned to her and said:

"Kittie, we have discovered the thief. Mr. Hawes from the Junction is bringing him up. We caught him with my bill which was marked."

"I am glad," she answered quickly.
"We will all feel safer."

"Guess who it is ?" he commanded. A sudden fear contracted Katherine's heart. Could it be Peter ? Tony Ballou laughed sneeringly at the fear in her face. "So ? Perhaps he is a friend of yours ?" He asked mockingly.

"It can't be Peter !"

"Peter ?" He replied sharply.
"Peter ! Why do you mention

him ? ” Katherine laughed from sheer relief.

“ Of course, I knew it couldn’t be.” She said thankfully. “ But my pocketbook was stolen and my trunk had seventy cents due on it. I asked Peter to lend me the money—he had trouble getting it—and—” Three men appeared in the doorway.

“ Ah ! ” Mr. Ballou exclaimed, “ Send the man in here to me, Hawes, you wait outside, please.”

One of the men stepped reluctantly into the room. The other two closed the door and remained outside, presumably watching. Mr. Ballou eyed the culprit sternly.

“ Why didn’t you wait until the guests arrived before starting in with your little tricks ? ” He asked coldly. “ You would have made more.”

The thief stood in the same place, just inside the door, a hopeless picture

of misery and despair. Katherine glanced up when he first came into the room, but quickly resumed her work.

“Heaven help him,” she thought, “He looks very unhappy.” Tony Ballou was talking. Such harsh, cruel words. The figure in the doorway drooped lower. Katherine tried to shut the scene out from her mind.

“Kittie!” Tony Ballou’s voice startled her. “Here are some pocketbooks that were found in Smith’s room. Is one of them yours? I have proof of my marked bill being in his possession. I need only one more fact to convince me. Pick out your pocketbook, that will be final proof.”

Slowly Katherine moved to the Manager’s desk. The figure in the doorway raised his head and gave her one agonizing look of appeal. Katherine stopped.

"His eyes are Dearie's eyes!" she thought in amazement. Her glance ran along the row of pocketbooks on Mr. Ballou's desk, and lingered for a moment on her own silver-tipped cardcase. She hated losing it for Tottie had given it to her on her last birthday. Mr. Ballou, watching her with half closed eyes, instantly noted her slight hesitation. Katherine took a deep breath.

"My pocketbook is not there." She said positively as she returned to her machine. Mr. Ballou's eyes opened with a jerk.

"Are you sure?" he asked sharply. She nodded.

From where she sat Katherine could not see Mr. Ballou's movements; which was well for her peace of mind, as he immediately reached for the silver-tipped cardcase and carefully examined its contents. A few news-

paper clippings and the photograph of a man rewarded his efforts. He gasped, then sat silent for several moments in deep thought, gazing down into his brother's smiling eyes.

"It was a man threw Kittie Casey over," he thought in bewilderment. "And that man was you—my own brother. My own brother Jack."

The man in the doorway moved nervously from one foot to the other. Quickly Ballou turned on him.

"I've decided to give you another chance." He said harshly. "Here is a ticket for the city. Come, I want to see you pack your things and off on the next train; but if I catch you around here again I'll jail you. Understand that. Try starting straight next time. It's the only way." With a prayer of thanksgiving Katherine went on with her work.

"It is odd," she thought, "How

well I can pray for others—but never for myself. Jack's picture is in my pocketbook—I cannot lose that." Like a flash she sprang from her chair and with trembling fingers slipped the picture out of the card-case, inside her handkerchief, and tucked it in her belt. The gray mist closed in and she had to feel her way back to her desk.

Tony Ballou found her sitting with tightly clenched hands. He gave her a sharp glance as he seated himself at his desk and reached for the card-case. The picture was gone.

"Come here, Kittie," he called curtly.

Katherine tried to obey. The mist was so thick she could not see the furniture and she stumbled as she walked. Tony Ballou watched her in amazement.

"What's the matter?" he asked

shortly. Katherine fought hard for composure, harder still to see, then throwing her hands out in despair, she cried wildly,

“I am blind ! Blind !” With one motion Tony Ballou shut the office door to keep out curious eyes, and gently led Katherine to his chair.

“Tell me about it,” he commanded gently. “You can trust me.” Katherine leaned back, her hands pressed to her throbbing head.

“I have been having trouble with my eyes. Dr. Pau said I would go blind. I came up here so as not to do office work. I should have known better than to try, but you needed a stenographer, and——”

Tony Ballou patted her shoulder encouragingly.

“It’s all my fault, I shouldn’t have worked you so hard,” he said remorsefully. “Well, these spells pass off,

don't they. Then brace up, girl, and beginning with to-morrow you'll have nothing to do but take care of Dearie. Not a heart-ache, pardon me, eye-ache in the whole job. I'll do the right thing by you. You wait and see." Katherine smiled through her tears. The mists were growing lighter.

"I am ashamed of myself," she said, brokenly. "But when the darkness shuts down I lose my nerve." As she pulled her handkerchief from her belt Jack's picture fell to the floor. Hastily Tony Ballou stooped and picked it up.

"You dropped this," he said nervously as he handed it back to her, face side down. She almost snatched it from his hand.

"You value it?" he asked huskily.

"I'd sooner lose everything else I have," she answered fervently.

Hours after Katherine left him Tony Ballou still sat at his desk wondering many things about his brother. His younger brother who was as the apple of his eye to him.

"No wonder Miss Carew quarreled with Jack," he thought, "Kittie Casey told her. Well, I must do my part to make atonement for the wrong Jack has done. Poor girl, going blind, and cast aside by the man she loves. By my own brother. I'd as soon believe it of myself."

Tony Ballou was not a man to sit idly wasting time in fruitless regrets, and the morning saw a great change in Katherine's life. At the Manager's orders the bungalow on the side of the hill, within a stone's throw of the hotel, was opened and cleaned. The three rooms it contained, one convertible into an open air bedroom, were finished in log cabin style, and were

pretty and homelike. Katherine's amazement was complete when Mr. Ballou showed her over the place and said,

“This is to be your house and Dearie's. Later in the season, perhaps, I may have to take one of the rooms for the steward's wife, but for the present the whole house is yours. In rainy weather your meals will be served here ; in fine weather you will eat in the Side Hall.” Katherine was speechless nearly from gratitude. The food in the helps' hall was one of her greatest trials.

“But all the chambermaids have to eat in the helps' hall, don't they ?” she asked anxiously.

“But you are not a chambermaid,” Mr. Ballou laughed. “I discharge you right now.” Katherine turned pale. “And engage you as Dearie's special attendant,” he hastened to add.

"And children and nurses eat in the Side Hall you know."

"You are truly kind," Katherine said with quivering lips. "And I am grateful." As Tony Ballou walked back to the hotel beside her, with Dearie in his arms, he said to himself,

"What a cad Jack was. Kittie's a fine girl. Wonder who her people were. Perhaps I might ask her," with a side glance at Katherine's contented face, "No, I don't think I could."

Not feeling capable of doing the subject justice in a letter, Tony Ballou refrained from writing to his brother.

"Just wait until I see him," he said to himself. "Just wait!"

By the time the hotel officially opened for the season Katherine and Dearie were happily settled in their new home, and Katherine was very busy fashioning dainty clothes for her little charge. Many a bit of wonder-

ful embroidery the other girls stitched into Dearie's frocks, for Katherine dared not try her eyes with fine work. Sometimes the little dresses were over-ladened with ornamentation, but Katherine allowed the girls full rein to their imaginations.

"It pleases them to suit their own ideas of taste," she said to Tony Ballou. "And as Dearie belongs to all in the hotel, I have no right to insist upon my ideas all the time." And smilingly he agreed with her.

Dearie was fast losing her fear of strangers, and holding tightly at first to Katherine's hand she spent many happy hours with the girls in the Linen Room and the waitresses on their long benches outside the Dining Hall.

The season had opened with great promise, and every employee in the hotel looked with favor on their little

blind mascot. She was quick to learn their names by their voices, and proved to be of a very affectionate nature, loving them all indiscriminately. Tom was still first, however, and "Muvver" a close second.

Katherine was happier than she had been for months. She loved the child more and more every day. The peaceful life, and sleeping out of doors was working wonders for her nerves. The gray mist came but seldom now.

She saw very little of Tony Ballou. Each day Peter would carry Dearie to the Manager's room for a frolic and bring her back again to the bungalow. But every night at prayer time, no matter how busy Tony Ballou happened to be, he would break loose from everyone, and come briskly up the path to the mascot's door. Such a helpless little mascot as she was,

groping her way blindly to every heart she met.

The Manager's orders to Katherine were quite explicit. Each morning Dearie was to be taken from one department to another of the hotel. None was to be slighted. The busy chef would stop his work to smile.

"Bon jour, ma petite," Rosie, the prettiest waitress, would cry,

"You bring me luck. My tips yesterday were corking."

The lonely girls would steal away from their work long enough to have a cuddle with Dearie, and Katherine watched, with tears of thankfulness in her eyes, the hard faces of the discontented ones soften at the touch of the baby hands. A thought had been gradually forcing itself upon her. A thought she did not like to harbor, but could not dismiss. That girls in hotels were sorely tried to keep good.

Despite the rules, there were plenty of chances of straying, and all too willing ones to show the way. Bringing Dearie into contact with the lonely girls, the tired girls, and the wayward girls seemed to have become Katherine's mission in life; and many's the times the baby hands held a trembling soul back from destruction.

In the Linen Room the gossiping tongues were stilled while Dearie stayed; and probably more than one reputation was spared through her unconscious influence.

That the Linen Room, where the chambermaids retailed their choicest bits of gossip to a select few cronies, nothing escapes the keen eyes of the apparently harmless hotel chambermaid, Katherine soon learned.

“Are the couple in 218 married?”
one would ask.

"Yes, they have the baby's picture on the dresser," Sadie would reply with a regretful shrug of her shoulders.

"Are you sure it is their baby?"

"Yes, they are kissing it all the time—both of them."

"Does the lady reporter in 325 intend to stay long?" Another would ask.

"No, she can't. She's only got one evening dress and a suitcase," was enlightening to Katherine.

Cora, who should be on watch, was missing.

"She's up in 104 trying on Blondine's hats while she's out automobiling," Ellen confided to Katherine. "There's one white hat I look swell in."

To one and all in the hotel Dearie was a little bit of home. The home each one had left and yearned for,

whether north, south, east, or west. The child reached down into their hearts and drew forth the goodness lying hidden away from alien eyes. The tender thoughts, the soft caresses they had been wont to smother all found expression through her.

“Do you love me, kid?” The houseman would ask, swinging Dearie up in his arms, and thinking of his own little dearie many miles away.

“Yes. Love you lots,” Dearie would quickly reply, kissing his work-stained face.

“How much, Kid?” he would persist.

“More than seventeen—eleven houses,” was Dearie’s invariable answer; and with a chuckle Davie would gently place her on her feet again, and tucking her hand into Katherine’s, go back to his work with a smiling face.

One rainy day Katherine improvised a wonderful story about a naughty boy who stole an aeroplane, and sailed away, way, up in the sky, and could never, never, come back. Dearie's active mind grasped the story with avidity, and she spent the rest of the day repeating it to each of the bellboys in turn. With each repetition she would improve on the original version, until finally the naughty little boy had taken his entire family and a fair sized stockyard of pets along with him to keep him from feeling lonesome and afraid. Dearie never could bear to have anyone unhappy or lonesome in the slightest degree even in a story.

Late in July Katherine noticed that Tony Ballou had lost his usually bright smiling manner. She pondered over the matter, then found courage to ask him what was amiss.

Dearie had just been put to bed, and Katherine, as was her custom, had gone as far as the steps of the bungalow with the Manager. At her question he stopped.

"Kittie," he said gravely, "you know what Dearie means to me, to all of us. She's been an angel straight from heaven. You've seen the good she has accomplished among the girls and men here. And I—I've tried to be a better man—indeed I've tried, Kittie. Well, Miss Daggett, the lady I hoped would be my wife refuses to have anything to do with Dearie. Won't see her even."

Katherine shook her head sadly. She knew Ethel Daggett. No, certainly she was not the kind of girl to be bothered with a blind baby.

"I told her," the Manager continued with a set mouth, "I would not give up Dearie—so she threw

me over——” His voice broke and he hurried away down the path.

Katherine stood looking wistfully after him. It was dreadful. Who would win out? Ethel Daggett or poor little Dearie? And if Dearie lost, what would become of her? As if in answer to her thoughts, a man stepped round the corner of the vine-covered porch. Katherine jumped with fright as the figure clearly defined in the moonlight.

“What is it?” she asked sharply.
“Why it’s Smith the man who——”

“The man who stole—the thief.”
The man prompted bitterly.

“What are you doing here?” she asked, with a sudden premonition of trouble.

“To see my child,” he said eagerly.
“Fore God, lady, I’m not a common thief. I had to have that money, had to. I’m working down to Hopedale.

I took a freight up here. I've tried to be satisfied just looking at Dearie—but I can't—I gotter kiss her once."

For a moment Katherine hesitated, and then she turned toward the door.

"Come in," she said gently, "Dearie is asleep and you must not wake her so be very quiet."

Hungrily the man gathered the sleeping child into his arms. Katherine watched him with a troubled face. She had a problem to solve.

At his first kiss Dearie stirred, then awoke with a cry of delight.

"My Tom, my very own Tom—" she sobbed as she snuggled up to the haggard man as Katherine had never seen her snuggle to anyone before. "And a naughty little boy what wouldn't obey his mother, and what say no I won't when poor tired mother say will you go to the store—and she say bring me in some sticks nice and

pretty and he say I won't—" Katherine moved away so she could not see the man's miserable face as Dearie launched forth on her famous aeroplane story. "And one dark night he stole a bright new a-re-o-plane, Tom, with silver wings, and sailed way, way, up in the sky and—" Dearie was growing drowsy. Her head nodded, then straightened with an effort. "And sailed—round, and round, down down the starry paths—" The big brown eyes were closing fast. "Up ice mountains—with his Muvver—and Tom—"

Gently the man laid the child back on her pillow, and tenderly as a woman drew the bedclothes about her.

"I can't stay or I'll miss my freight back," he said brokenly. "Can I come again?" Katherine held out her hand.

“Come when you can,” she said kindly. “But I am afraid the freight is dangerous. May I loan you a little money——” He shook his head.

“Freight is quieter. Don’t want anyone to see me,” he said positively. “I drop off at the trestle. I’ll come every night I’m free.”

Tony Ballou stopped abruptly, and slipped into the shadow of the bushes, as he saw the man coming from the rear of the bungalow and disappearing into the trees. He had returned determined to talk things over more fully with Katherine. As the moonlight fell on the man’s face Tony Ballou gasped.

“It’s Smith!” he almost shouted in his astonishment. “That thief Smith. What in the world is he doing round her. Sneaking round.” The whistle of the freight drew his attention.

“That’s it, he comes and goes on

the freight. Where from ? The city ? Hardly. That woman—no—I'd take my oath on Kittie Casey, she's honest. Where did I see his face ? It haunted me—even that night in my office—and again now. Who does he look like ?" Slowly the Manager retraced his steps to the hotel.

Gradually an estrangement crept in between Tony Ballou and Katherine, the old sympathetic understanding had ceased to exist. Katherine noticed, but was too troubled about Dearie's father to really worry about it.

On his side Tony Ballou nightly watched the bungalow. Sometimes the slinking figure of Smith would come round the corner and enter ; some nights he watched in vain ; but a deepening distrust of Katherine was forming in his mind, which was destined later to bring him to a knowledge of many things.

CHAPTER IV.

ETHEL DAGGETT IS JEALOUS.

As Tony Ballou's distrust of Katherine Carew deepened, he took to making unexpected visits to the bungalow at all hours of the day. Katherine never knew when he would appear and the uncertainty annoyed her. That he doubted her she knew quite well, but her only fear was that in some way he had discovered her identity with the Miss Carew, his brother's friend; for he would bring Jack's name into the conversation with appalling frequency. If she had been sure of her incognito she would have enjoyed hearing about Jack; but as it was she shivered every time Tony Ballou appeared on the pathway.

He would stroll up from the hotel, his cigarette between his lips, settle himself in the swing on the porch, and watch Katherine for minutes without saying a word. She in her turn would quietly sew with only an occasional word to Dearie ; but many a heartfelt ejaculation arose from her unhappy heart that the Divine Wisdom would show her a way out of her difficulties. Katherine Carew had indeed learned to pray again, and it was the sweet lips of the blind child that had taught her. Dearie sensed something wrong between her two most cherished ones, and tried to love both all the more on that account.

One oppressively hot afternoon in early August, when the usual cool mountain breeze was lacking, and even the trees drooped in the sultry air, Tony Ballou was sitting on the porch in more marked silence than

ordinary. His heart was sore against Katherine for proving deceitful. Try as he would, he could not forget the frequent stealthy visits of the man Smith. Contrary to the threat he had made in his office, when he let the man go free, he had not jailed him, but was playing a waiting game trying to decide what the relationship was between him and Kittie Casey.

Now as he sat in gloomy silence he noticed the figure of a heavily veiled woman hastily retreating behind the summer house as soon as she saw him on the porch. Without apparently looking at her, he watched her for several minutes, then turning to Katherine said harshly,

“Who is that woman hiding in the summer house, Kittie? A friend of yours I suppose.”

“In the summer house? I do not see anybody,” Katherine replied

with sincerity. Impatiently Tony Ballou sprang to his feet and hurried up the slight hill toward the vine-covered rustic house. Katherine watched him in amazement. In a few minutes he came slowly back, a frown disfiguring his handsome face.

"She ran away from me," he said angrily. "I suppose you haven't the slightest idea who she was?" with a sarcastic sneer.

"Nobody knows I am up here," she replied gravely. "But if you think she wishes to see me, why don't you go down to the hotel. Perhaps if it is only you she is afraid of, she will return."

Tony Ballou was dumbfounded at her coolness.

"Perhaps she might," he said curtly, taking Dearie in his arm. "When she has gone send Peter for the child.

I do not care to have her meet objectionable people."

Katherine set her lips firmly together. There was no use trying to explain. She did not know who was in the summer house. She knew that Ethel Daggett had returned the Manager's letters unopened and that he was very unhappy; so no wonder his temper was uncertain. Sometimes she wondered why she stayed on at Peaceful Valley. Was it on account of Dearie? She hoped that was her only reason, but deep down in her heart she knew the real reason was she wanted to be where she could hear of Jack from his brother.

Now as she sat and waited for the veiled woman to reappear she was dreaming of home, and Jack, and Tottie, and all her friends, and so when a familiar voice cried,

"Kit Carew!" and Tony Ballou's

veiled woman rushed up on the porch and threw herself into her arms, Katherine felt no surprise, but gathered the weeping girl close to her, and helping to remove the enshrouding meshes of chiffon, revealed the wistful face of a much chastened Ethel Daggett.

"I just couldn't stay away, so I came up to Hopedale with Aunt Grace." Ethel sobbed, "I love Tony, and I hate that child. Where is she?" Katherine smiled whimsically.

"Mr. Ballou has taken her down to the hotel so she will not meet objectionable people," she said with a twinkle in her eye. "He saw you hiding, then you ran away from him, and he thinks you are one of my objectionable friends."

"Objectionable? How did he dare say that?" Ethel gasped.

"You must remember he did not

recognize you," Katherine interposed. "Also that veil makes you look like a fright, quite impossible in fact." Ethel commenced to cry again.

"I'm so miserable, Kit, you don't know, what shall I do?" she wailed. Katherine gently stroked the bowed head,

"If you really love Tony, dear, you know you cannot be happy without him," she said softly.

"But that child, she's blind—blind, Kit, think of having a blind child always pawing over your face. I can't, not even for Tony," Ethel stormed.

"Why not wait to decide about that until you see Dearie," Katherine suggested. "I love her so much that the thought of giving her up to anyone, even you, is almost impossible. Everyone in the hotel loves her. Their little mascot they call her, you should see

them vying for the kisses. And they find her loving little hands soothing and comforting." Ethel stared in amazement.

"But what are you doing here, Kit?" she asked.

"Taking care of Dearie," Katherine replied.

"But Tony never told me," Ethel said with an aggrieved air.

"He does not know himself," Katherine answered quickly. "And you must not tell him, Ethel, here I am Kitty Casey. Yes, the little Irish girl, Bobby's 'Light of me eyes.' She has gone back to Ireland, I am taking her place. Dr. Pau told me I would be blind soon, and I wanted to be among strangers when the darkness came."

"But why?" Ethel cried in consternation. "Your folks will never forgive you for masquerading. Mrs.

Carew—will have fits. And they would comfort you—" Katherine laughed ruefully and shook her head.

" Need they know ?" she asked wistfully. " Keep my secret, Ethel, and come to see me often, I am lonely." Ethel's arms went quickly round her.

" I'll come every day," she said eagerly. " And perhaps, sometimes, I might see Tony without his seeing me." Katherine laughed through her tears.

" Often, he haunts this place, on account of Dearie, you see she is his only comfort now." Ethel's lips trembled, but she winked the tears back.

" You are cruel, Kit," she said dolefully. " I'm dreadfully thirsty, and frightfully hot. Could you extend your hospitality to the extent of an ice ?"

" Certainly !" Katherine answered.

“Wait until I hoist this little red flag. That means I want a bell-boy. We have a regular list of signals,” she continued, as the flag after a spasmodic flutter, drooped against the diminutive flag pole. “There is no telephone here in the bungalow, so we signal by flags in the day-time, and with lanterns at night.”

In a few minutes Peter strolled up the pathway.

“Gee, it’s hot.” He said, fanning himself with his cap. “The kid’s playing bear with a crowd of the boys. Say you ought to stop her, she’s getting too excited and’ll be sick.” A pucker marred the smoothness of Katherine’s forehead.

“Will you take a message to Mr. Ballou for me, Peter, please. Tell him that a friend of Miss Carew’s is here, and wants to see Dearie, and ask him if we may have some ices.” Peter’s

eyes opened, and he nearly choked trying to swallow a whistle.

“Sure thing.” He answered as soon as he could get his breath. “I’ll remember, a friend of Miss——”

“Miss Katherine Carew.” Katherine repeated. “And she wishes to see Dearie, and may we please have some ices.”

Peter returned to the hotel with unusual celerity.

“Where’s the Boss?” He asked the clerk, briefly.

“Taken the kid to his room to keep her quiet.” Was the laconic reply.

Peter’s gravity puzzled the elevator boy as they ascended to the third floor, and the expression of his face attracted even Tony Ballou’s absent mind as he opened the door to him. Peter stated his errand while his eyes wandered to Dearie peacefully playing on the Manager’s bed.

“Wait a minute.” Tony Ballou said as he moved to the window and gazed searchingly in the direction of the bungalow; but the thick trees shut off his view.

Dearie was calling eagerly to Peter. As he obeyed her peremptory summons he noticed she was playing with the photograph of a girl. She threw it aside, however, when Peter reached her.

“And a big bear come out of the woods and eat you up. B-r-r-r-r! B-r-r-r-r!” she cried, throwing her arms around his neck.

“I say, kid, forget that bear,” Peter counseled. “It’s too hot. Here,” picking up the photo, “who’s your—gee, what a peach—holy smoke—” The last remark under his breath. “Say, Boss—” he added aloud, with his most winning smile, “Is this a picture of your sister?” Tony Ballou shook his

head, and without turnin ground answered bitterly.

"I have no sister. That is a picture of the most beautiful woman in the world, and the sweetest—and she threw me down hard." Peter frowned at the picture. "Go bring Miss Carew's friend whatever refreshment she desires." He said glancing toward the bed. "Then come back and bring her Dearie also."

With a much puzzled mind Peter obeyed. The Boss's girl was up at the bungalow, crying, but didn't want to see the Boss. But wouldn't the Boss like to see her he wondered? Peter rather fancied he would, so after seeing Katherine, her friend, and Dearie settled on the porch contentedly disposing of their ices, he returned to the Manager's room.

"Say, Boss," he said, with an effort keeping his face serious. "You know

I ain't one to tell tales—you know I ain't; but there's something up to the bungalow you ought to see. And if you take your field-glass, and go round the other side of the old ice-house, you'll see everything—and not disturb them." He concluded limply. Tony Ballou's face grew stern.

"Thank you, Peter." He said, with an angry glitter in his eyes, "Neither do I spy on people; but this case seems to defy all gentlemanly rules of conduct."

Peter watched him depart with his glasses slung over his shoulder, and throwing back his head indulged in spasms of mirth. A sudden thought sobered him. Supposing anyone should wander up to the old ice-house, and see the Boss in the undignified attitude of spying on the bungalow? Hastily Peter ran to the foot of the path and settled himself on the

old fence. For an hour he stood guard and turned more than one person away with the ingenious remark.

“Snakes up near the old ice-house. Everyone’s to go round by the spring.”

When he heard Tony Ballou returning he scuttled down to the hotel, to be met by the irate clerk with the question,

“Are you supposed to be working? Or are you up here for your health? They’ve been signaling for you from the bungalow for half an hour.” The Manager arrived on the scene in time to hear the remark. He glanced quickly at Peter.

“What’s the matter?” He asked the clerk.

“Peter’s been sitting on a fence at the foot of the old ice-house path telling people there were snakes up there——” The clerk commenced an-

grily. Tony Ballou's face grew suddenly rosy.

"Were you there, Peter?" He asked, taking the boy by the shoulders. Peter tried to twist away from the Manager's searching, smiling eyes.

"Honest, Boss." He answered with a shamefaced grin, "I heard a noise—and there might have been snakes—and the Buttinskies round here," with a glare at the innocent clerk, "wouldn't know a snake if it bit them."

"They are signaling for you at the bungalow." Tony Ballou said with a laugh. "Come to my room when you return—and we'll talk this matter over."

Peter fairly pranced up the path to the bungalow. A real romance and he in the middle of it. He tried to peer through the folds of Ethel's veil

and discover if she was still tearful, but failed.

“Peter,” Katherine commenced coaxingly. “Could you get off long enough to walk down to Hopedale with my friend. She is afraid to go alone, and I cannot leave Dearie.” Peter grinned with delight.

“Sure,” he said. “The Boss won’t kick. Where’re you stayin’? Mansion House?” Ethel nodded.

“Swell place,” Peter admitted reluctantly. “But, say, why don’t you come up here? It’s more select. Sure! We had a real Prince here last year —” Katherine smiled as she watched them out of sight and turned to Dearie, who was jingling a string of beads Ethel had taken from her own neck and slipped around the baby’s.

A very chesty Peter reported at the Manager’s room.

“ Well ?” Tony Ballou asked, trying hard to hide his eagerness.

“ I saw the lady home, Boss,” the boy began breathlessly, as willing to talk as the Manager was to listen. “ And when we got up in the woods she took off her hat and veil again—and gee ! she’s pretty—and she knows a lot too. Showed me all the different kinds of trees, and told me their names—jawbreakers—but she said them slick as whistling. And she can sing too, Boss, like a bird.” Only too well did Tony Ballou know that fact. The liquid tones of her voice still thrilled in his memory. “ I told her she’d get a job in a moving picture show any day she got broke.” Peter continued condescendingly.

“ And what did she say to that ?” Tony Ballou asked.

“ Said she’d think about it,” Peter replied gravely. “ And when we

came to the bridge over Sweetwater Brook we sat on the bench and talked."

"What about!" The Manager asked innocently. Peter grinned.

"About you, Boss." He said with a chuckle. "I told her how we all—well, you know, Boss, you're sure popular—and I tried to make her jealous."

"Jealous?" Tony Ballou asked in bewilderment. "Why?"

"Aw, just to get her mad up and see how she'd look." Peter replied with scorn. "I told her you were stuck on Kittie Casey. And she laughed and said Kittie Casey was stuck on your brother. Is she? But I got her going finally." He said triumphantly.

"How?" Tony Ballou asked sharply.

"I told her about Blondine being gone on you. She didn't like that

much you could see, though I told her you hadn't reciprocated yet. Then I told her, the real sure for all, was a little French widow with black eyes—and lots of dough—and that she'd followed you South last winter—and 's been here all summer—and how you used to avoid her—but now—" The anger in the Manager's face frightened Peter, and he backed toward the door.

"How did you dare tell her that pack of lies?" He cried with clenched fists.

"Honest to goodness, Boss, I wanted to make her jealous—that's the way to get a girl. Sure! And say, the pastry cook is a French widow—and she did come South last winter—and she is here now—and you never ate her stuff until Dearie came—and now you're always chasing her up to make sugar cookies—"

The Manager's face relaxed. He laughed again and again, Peter gladly joined him.

"Say, she's a real swell, ain't she, Boss?" He remarked admiringly. "She didn't say one word when she got mad, just froze up like."

"Better report to the office, Peter." Tony Ballou recommended. "Davidson is inclined to be nervous if he's shorthanded."

Peter grinned as he started down the corridor. A minute later he poked his head in the Manager's doorway.

"Say, Boss." He whispered mysteriously. "There's a shortcut over to the bridge at Sweetwater—and a cave to hide—I mean rest in." Tony Ballou nodded.

"I was just thinking of that," he said. "If—"

"If only one of Dearie's bears would come out of the wood—you could

rescue her." Peter interrupted with happy inspiration.

"And what would you be doing?" The manager asked curiously.

"Aw, I'd give the bear a clip over the head that would knock him out, then I'd run, of course, I ain't no chump." Peter replied with pride.

"All right, boy, we'll make it a date." Tony Ballou answered laughing. "Just you find the bear, Peter, and I'll be on hand to do the rescuing."

CHAPTER V.

DOLORES.

IT was the evening of the memorable day that Tony Ballou, from his vantage point behind the old ice-house, had watched Ethel Daggett on the porch of the Bungalow. Katherine was hearing Dearie say her prayers as the Manager, for some days past, had declared himself too busy to be bothered. Dearie finished her usual devotions hesitated, and after a moment's thought added this petition.

“ Dear Mother Mary make lady what given me my chain a good girl.”

“ But, Dearie, she is a good girl.” Katherine remonstrated.

“ You little heathen,” Tony Ballou

called from the doorway. "That's a sacrilege. I've a good mind to make you say your prayers all over again." Dearie cried with delight at the sound of his voice and would not be quiet until she had repeated her prayers to him. Long after she slept Katherine and the Manager sat on the porch talking. Tony Ballou had quite forgotten about the man Smith. He had seen Ethel Dagget, in the afternoon, kissing Kittie Casey; and could no more doubt Ethel's friend, than he could doubt Ethel herself.

Katherine was hopeful that Dearie would win Ethel's love; and Tony Ballou, after a joyful hour of singing Ethel's praises to sympathetic ears, went down to the hotel full of admiration for Kittie Casey.

Every fine afternoon Ethel would arrive at the Bungalow and sit with Katherine and Dearie; and every

afternoon, at precisely the same hour, the Manager would vanish from the hotel with his field-glasses over his shoulder; and also every afternoon, at exactly the same time, Peter sat on the old wooden fence and warned people away from the snakes on the old ice-house path.

One afternoon Ethel was surprised to see several girls and two men coming from the helps' wing, each carrying a musical instrument.

"Are we going to have a concert?" she asked eagerly.

"No, not exactly," Katherine answered. "You see, there is a new rule that the help cannot give music lessons in their rooms. There are several Conservatory students up here who are giving lessons in their spare time to make extra money. It was a fine excuse for the girls and men to go to each other's rooms; some of

them would lark and fool ; and Tony Ballou decided to put a stop to it. So the new rule goes into effect to-day. Each section of the woods has been preempted. The little Cuban girl in the store room, Dolores, that one with the violin, has the best place, the grove here beside the Bungalow. Tony Ballou has had seats built for them all. It won't be long before Dolores' pupils will begin to arrive."

Ethel watched with amusement the open air lessons. Dolores was truly beautiful, and an artist to her finger tips. Her pupils, a bell-boy, a telegrapher from the railroad, and a young chap, who came from the camp below the river at the other side of Peaceful Valley, never took their eyes off her. The lessons progressed with vigor. Dolores was a hard task-mistress. When the last pupil had left, Dolores raised her violin to her breast, tuck-

ing it beneath her chin with a caressing motion.

“Will she play?” Ethel asked breathlessly. Katherine shrugged her shoulders.

“If she is in the humor she can play beautifully.” As if in answer to Ethel’s question, the bow flashed in the sunshine, and Dolores swaying in unison with her music, played her heart out on her violin.

“Look!” Ethel cried eagerly grasping Katherine’s hand. “Over there the other side of the grove.” Katherine did as directed.

Pushing his way through the underbrush was a handsome boy; the oldest son of Señor Alvarez; who, with his family, was staying at the hotel. On he came as if hypnotized; his great brown eyes fixed on the girl as she played his native melodies. Within a few feet of her he stopped

and spoke. Dolores turned, laughed gaily, tossed back her hair, which had slipped from its net, and commenced playing a wild gypsy dance. For an hour the boy stood listening, with never a word, his great eyes gazing into hers. As far as the young people were concerned Katherine and Ethel on the porch counted for nothing.

"We are only chaperons, Ethel. How do you like it?" Katherine asked.

"I don't." Ethel replied with a shiver. "Those two children are falling in love with each other, as sure as fate. It is impossible. She's sixteen, and he's what? Seventeen do you think?"

The same program was repeated for a week. Then one day, when the concert was progressing as usual, Señor Alvarez, an exceedingly angry man, strode up to the grove; took his

equally angry, but helpless, son by the ear ; marched him down to the hotel and along the veranda, much to the amusement of the other guests, who were listening to the concert by the orchestra ; and locked him in his room. After that Dolores played alone. Minor keys now, no more wild gypsy dances.

One morning Senor Alvarez awoke to find his son's room vacant. Dolores also was missing from her post in the store-room. The famous detective, Albert Brown, who was staying at the hotel, at the urgent request of Señor Alvarez offered his services.

A short hour revealed the fact that the young lovers had walked across the trestle, no easy feat on a dark night, and taken the train at Hopedale for the city. Mr. Brown and Señor Alvarez quickly followed them.

On the late evening train a miser-

able pair arrived at Peaceful Valley. The foolish children had reached the city but failed to obtain a license on account of their youth.

Their two pursuers caught them in a public park contemplating the best way of committing suicide together. Without any preliminaries they were haled back to Peaceful Valley; and as soon as he could gather his belongings together, Señor Alvarez, with his family and servants, departed, to put many, many miles between his enamored son and the fascinating violinist.

Tony Ballou was at first very much upset by the incident; but Katherine quickly proved to him the utter absurdity of punishing Dolores by sending her back to the city.

As for Dolores, she still haunted the grove; and for a time Katherine almost feared she would do away

with herself. Gradually, however, her spirits brightened; and long before the season at the mountains ended Dolores was her own gay, merry self again.

“We grow up, we two, yes? And then I am a great violinist.” She confided to Katherine. “Or if not—What matters one love? There are many others!”

“The artistic temperament,” Katherine reflected. “And she will certainly be an artist of note some day.”

It was at this time Ethel’s visits were interrupted. The girl who tended the souvenir shop was taken ill, and for lack of anyone else Katherine was pressed into service part of the time. Dearie enjoyed meeting the strangers, who made much of her; but Katherine dreaded it inexpressibly. Most of the guests were very kind, but some few of the men

raised a wild anger in Katherine's heart by their familiarities. Her broadest snubs were entirely ignored. The fact that Katherine was a distinguished looking girl may have had something to do with the case ; but her mortification was complete. She, Katherine Carew, could not keep men where they belonged without absolute rudeness. In desperation she consulted with Miss Carr, the stenographer. That clever girl laughed amusedly.

"Kittie Casey, you're too pretty," she mocked. Then suddenly becoming serious, she added, "No, girlie, the trouble is you are a new face. The men will soon tire of you—if you are hateful enough. They are trying you out." Miss Carr's mild gray eyes grew flinty. "Of course, anyone who pays for a night's lodging in a hotel feels entitled to offer his affections to

every one of its employees. They generally begin with me. Hotel stenographers' reputations are world-wide smirched. Though everybody gets a sample of it. The girl in the check-room probably is bothered most; and the telegraph girl is a close second."

"Then I cannot complain," Katherine sighed bitterly. "But what is the remedy, Miss Carr?" The girl laughed, and Katherine did not wonder that men found her most attractive.

"Do not work in hotels," she answered positively. "Or else be old, ugly, and hateful. But even homely girls are not exempt." She added laughing. "You know Tessie, who peels potatoes and vegetables, she is simple, poor thing, and only works here because her brother is one of the finest bakers in the country and won't

come without her. Well, one day a man tried to flirt with her as she stood at the kitchen window, poor Tessie thought he was sick and called her brother."

"And then?" Katherine inquired.

"And then a very much battered guest left with a limp, and Ballou stood up for Tessie's brother. Sometimes the guests try going into the dance hall and jollying with the girls, but Ballou keeps his eyes open and soon stops their nonsense."

"You would think gentlemen would prefer women of their own class," Katherine said scornfully. Miss Carr laughed indulgently.

"Variety delights, they say," she said wisely. "And I've always held that if anyone has a yellow streak in them it's bound to come out; and the sooner a girl finds her feet and stands squarely on them the better."

"Then the weak ones must fall? Is that your theory?" Katherine asked gravely. Miss Carr shook her head.

"No, leave hotel work and go into something else." She answered quickly. "The trouble is, in a hotel, everybody minds their own business when it is a matter of stopping another from slipping from the path—but let them once slip, and every hand will be put out, every tongue be sharpened, against them. And how they do love to pass the gossip along. To work in a hotel, you must be like Cæsar's wife, 'Above reproach'." Katherine sighed again. The problem was too big for her to solve.

That evening having occasion to go to Beattie's room, the girl who laundered Dearie's clothes, Katherine was a trifle disturbed to be kept waiting quite a few minutes before the girl would open the door. When Beattie

did so, however, she laughed with relief.

“Oh, it’s only you,” she said ungraciously. “I thought it was some of those nosey herrings down the line.” Deliberately she locked the door, and pulling a tray from under the bed, commenced to gobble its contents. “The second cook is a friend of my Eddie’s,” she explained, between mouthfuls. “And every Thursday night he gives me a feed. Swell, just like this. Planked steak or chicken, no Side-Hall food, best that goes into the Big Hall, look at that for a tender bird. Everything to go with it, see, salad, fruit, entrée, and a bottle of beer.”

“But why? It must cost him a lot!” Katherine said in consternation.

“Cost him nothing, you greenie. He swipes it. If he didn’t do this for me—why, say, my husband got him

his first job—and this year my Eddie is chef, not cook mind you, but chef, up to Bar Harbor—and if Alphonse didn't give me a feed, you bet Eddie'd spoil his phiz with a good upper-cut or two, the first time they met. We bribe the little Dago tray boy to bring it up. He has a key to the room and puts the stuff under my bed. It's dead easy. All the tray boys use this staircase from the kitchen over into the hotel. The steward thinks he's bringing the tray to a guest." And Beattie choked with laughter.

"Why didn't you go to Bar Harbor with your husband?" Katherine asked curiously. Beattie's eyes narrowed to slits.

"Now you're getting some personal." She said saucily. "Cut the preaching. I didn't like the house-keeper, if you must know."

Katherine completed her errand as

quickly as possible and left Beattie still gorging herself, at the expense of the management.

"Certainly the ideas of honesty up here are peculiar," she thought. "I wonder how much of this Mr. Ballou knows about and has to wink at and shut his eyes to?"

The next week Katherine was free from the souvenir shop, and she breathed a sigh of relief as she settled back into her quiet afternoons with Ethel and Dearie. The two were becoming fast friends, and sometimes Katherine felt a twinge of jealousy at the child's occasional preference for Ethel. The thought of Tony Ballou, however, soon reconciled her to the inevitable.

Ethel had a curiously guilty way of glancing at Katherine through her drooping lids, that mystified Katherine not a little. Could she be

getting into mischief too? The mountain air seemed to be responsible for a good many things. Ethel kept her own counsel, but her thoughts ran like this :

“Jack Ballou must have received my letter by now. What will he do when he hears that Kit Carew is up here, going blind, and working as a servant?” And her mental answer always was; “Come to her at once!” Then for the hundredth time she would anxiously scan the wooded path up over the hill; the short cut from the railroad station. And if he did come how would Katherine treat him? Ethel could not answer that question, but she coaxed Dearie to add a clause to her night prayers, which neither Tony Ballou nor Katherine could comprehend.

“Make Katherine see straight.” The baby prayed, and Katherine, though

puzzled, echoed the words with fervor.

For indeed she needed to "see straight." Smith still made his nocturnal visits and she lived in daily dread of his being caught. Why Dearie did not give it away she could not imagine, but supposed as the child only met him when he wakened her from sleep, she considered him a dream, and Tony Ballou the only real "Tom" in her life.

A night in early September, when the fragrant pine-scented air held a breath of frost in it, borrowed from the mountain tops as it passed over them, Katherine bade good-night to Tony Ballou and sat in front of the open fire of seasoned wood, waiting for Smith. Usually his time was so short he could only kiss Dearie and run, but to-night Katherine was determined he should stay un-

til she had a satisfactory talk with him.

The man's nervous tap at the door was immediately followed by his entrance. As Katherine greeted him she wondered why she had never been afraid of his strange ways. It was Dearie's eyes shining from his haggard face that reassured her without a doubt.

Now she stopped him on his way to Dearie's room, and motioned him to a chair.

"Tom Smith," she commenced firmly. "You must listen to me even if you miss your train and wait for the later one. What are you going to do when Mr. Ballou goes to New York and takes Dearie, and again when they go South for the winter?" The man commenced to tremble. "I will not be there to shield you," she continued. "Prob-

ably you could not get a position in any hotel near; winter positions are not as plentiful as summer ones." The man stood twisting his cap between his hands.

"I've been honest all summer, 'fore God, I have." He cried desperately. "Don't tempt me, lady, don't tempt me."

"Nonsense!" Katherine replied angrily. "What do you mean? Mr. Ballou would not have you again in his hotel, think of the other employees how they would treat you. And Dearie! She is their idol now, what would she be as the daughter of a man who has been discharged for pilfering? think of Dearie, and let Mr. Ballou keep her." The man buried his face in his shaking hands.

"I can't, ma'am," he gasped. "Listen here. I was a bad lot when

Dearie's mother married me. She reformed me. She was an angel! Then Dearie came—and was blind. And I stole! Stole to give Dearie the care she needed—stole for food—stole for the doctors. Last winter Dearie's mother died—everything went wrong—I came up here—" The man's eyes flashed. " And you say give Dearie up—Never!"

" Hush!" Katherine commanded. " You will wake her. I have friends in the city. If you can keep straight until the season ends I will see you get employment. Steady work at good pay, I promise."

The man seized her hand and kissed it passionately.

At that moment Tony Ballou, who had remembered leaving his note-book at the bungalow, and seeing the light chanced finding Katherine still up, glanced at the affecting tableau.

“That man!” he said as he hurried away from the bungalow.

“Kiss Dearie good-night or you will miss the last train.” Katherine said gently with wet eyes. After the door closed behind the unhappy man she resumed her seat at the fire pondering whether her brother would accept Smith without a reference. He would never help her if he knew the man was a thief. And did she have the right to hide that fact from him? It was a matter which needed praying over. Much praying.

Tony Ballou, his heart hardening against Katherine, hurried down the path to the hotel. Smith was her lover and his brother Jack had probably been a dupe. His anger rose with every step.

“I'll go back and confront them.” He said, turning to retrace his steps.

A man's figure mingled with the

shadows of the grove. Stealthily Tony Ballou circled the bungalow.

“There he goes!” he said to himself, “now to catch him!” Carefully stepping on the dry pine needles the Manager approached his quarry from the rear. Another step and his hand gripped the man’s shoulder. “Turn round here, you thief!” He cried angrily, swinging the man about. He struggled and fought. Seeing an opportunity Tony Ballou tripped the man, who sprawled heavily, taking the Manager with him. Together they rolled over and over on the ground. In another instant Tony Ballou was on top. Both paused a moment for breath. Tony Ballou glared at his vanquished foe, the man gazed back at him in a dazed fashion.

“You!” the Manager cried aghast, as he weakly subsided to the ground. For the man staring up at him was not Smith, but his own brother Jack.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE BRIDGE AT SWEETWATER.

FOR a full minute after Tony Ballou recognized his brother in the man he had assaulted as Smith, silence reigned in the pine grove. Both men were winded from their rough and tumble fight. The Manager's right hand felt stiff, and his brother's left eye was rapidly closing.

"This is a great welcome." Jack gasped feebly. "Tony, I never guessed you had such strength."

"Did you think I was crazy?" His brother asked, laughing nervously. "Have I hurt you?" as he helped him to his feet. "Come down to the hotel and we'll talk things over. Were you trying to get a peek at Kittie Casey

without her seeing you? Who is the man Smith?"

"Hold on," Jack remonstrated. "My eye needs attention. Let's fix it first, then we can talk all night if we want to."

And talk nearly all night they certainly did. Long before their conversation terminated Tony Ballou's curiosity was fully satisfied. Ethel's letter to Jack had been very comprehensive; and with it, and the Manager's knowledge of events as they had transpired at Peaceful Valley, the two men pieced the story together with very few breaks. All excepting the man Smith. Ethel had known nothing of him; and Tony Ballou knew little. Jack scouted the idea of his being anything to Katherine. His Katherine was beyond suspicion.

In the morning Tony Ballou looked none the worse for his encounter with

his athletic brother, but poor Jack was nursing a glorious black eye.

"I cannot let Kit see me like this." He fretted, gazing into the mirror with his one well optic. "You're a great bruiser, Tony."

"Wait until it is dark this evening." His brother consoled him. "Then you can face her with impunity. Besides you don't know whether Miss Carew will be willing to see you."

"Now I know why she ran away from me," Jack replied firmly. "Nothing will keep me away from her. Why, Tony, if she ever needed me it's now. Eye or no eye, I'll go to her this afternoon as soon as the kid's asleep."

Before noon, however, Jack's courage failed him. He could not face the curious, looking as he did, so reluctantly he decided to put his visit to Katherine off until the evening.

The Manager pleaded press of

business ; and slipping his glasses into his pocket made good time to the old ice-house. Jack grinned sympathetically at his brother's eagerness ; but refrained from chaffing him. He could afford to be generous. He was going to see his heart's desire face to face, while poor Tony could only gaze at his from a long distance through a spy-glass. So Jack tried to settle contentedly with a book, but failed and sat dreaming instead. First of his brother and his trouble with Ethel. Next of the child Dearie. Then of Katherine herself. The evening seemed centuries away to the impatient man.

In the meantime, Tony Ballou, from his place at the ice-house, had seen Ethel arrive and greet Katherine and Dearie affectionately. As he gazed the longing to speak to Ethel grew irresistible. A very much excited

Manager startled Peter out of his pleasant nap.

"Get your bear to-day, boy." He cried. "I'm for the cave at Sweetwater." Peter danced with delight.

"You bet your life I will." He said with glee.

Ethel found Peter an abstracted escort on the walk over the hill. At the brook he stopped, and without waiting for her, seated himself on the bench, and after a sharp glance at the cave, remarked,

"There are real gold-fish in this stream. We fellers are going to catch some and take them home to the city with us. Don't you want to see some?"

"It is too cool to stay long," Ethel answered tolerantly. "Besides you walked so slowly we are late, but a few moments won't matter. Do you see any fish, Peter?"

"Say," he remarked irrelevantly. "Do you suppose if a feller asks and asks for a thing he'll get it? Prays, I mean?"

"If it is best for him," Ethel answered sweetly. "What have you been praying for, Peter?" Peter's eyes were fixed on the water gently purling over the stones.

"It's the Boss, Miss," he confided, with a suspiciously grave face. "He's in love with a skirt, Say, she must be a stiff, 'cause she threw him down on account of Dearie. 'Course we're not supposed to know—we just guesses—but in hotels we fellers generally guesses right. So I'm praying that a great, big, shaggy, bear with long sharp claws, will come out of the wood some day, and hug that girl to death. Say, what was that?" Ethel gave a little scream of fright and gazed wildly around.

"Are there ever bears in these woods?" She asked anxiously.

"You don't need to be afraid with me," Peter said proudly throwing out his chest, "If I saw a bear coming I'd give him a clip over the head. But say if it's a female bear with her cub, don't wait to see what I do—run, run fast—and don't waste your breath screaming, either—you'll need it."

"Come, Peter, we must be going," Ethel said nervously starting to her feet. Peter laughed and settled back on the bench.

"'Course in summer bears aren't much danger," he explained. "When winter sets in they come down out of the mountains. But sometimes a bear does stray down on a cool frosty day in fall—just like to-day—" Ethel moved quickly along the path.

"Come!" she said anxiously. "I am cold. What was that?" she cried,

hurrying back to Peter's side. "I saw something move in the cave," she gasped in a horrified whisper. Peter picked up a stout stick.

"I'll protect you," he said grandly. "If he kills me—you run."

At that moment something black and queer and noisy rolled and slipped from the mouth of the cave. Peter jumped to his feet in real alarm. Ethel shrieked aloud. The something rose to its feet disclosing a much disheveled Tony Ballou. Peter stood with mouth wide open staring; but Ethel flew to the Manager's arms.

"Save me! save me, Tony!" She cried.

"Lord," Peter laughed, recovering his wits with a start. "The Boss' foot slipped sure. Say—" he sighed, looking wistfully at the pair utterly oblivious of his presence. "Quick exit. Left, for mine," he said as he

swung off on the path for the hotel.
“Gee, I wish I had a girl.”

Katherine had felt strangely restless all day. She could neither sew nor play with Dearie; and finally after Ethel left, in desperation she took the child down to the hotel.

“It must be the cool weather that is making me so lively,” she thought. “My eyes are feeling just splendid. I can hardly keep from thinking of the office, and Mr. Travers. How I would like to walk in upon him; take off my hat; go to my old desk; and work, work, work!”

“Emily!” Dearie called loudly.
“Emily, wait!”

The girl turned; the two men who had been talking with her moved down the track. Emily was by far the prettiest girl in the hotel, excepting Rosie the waitress. Katherine smiled as the girl picked Dearie up in

her arms and hugged her. Dearie shouted with glee. As Emily put the child down on the ground a sheaf of railroad tickets fell from her blouse. Katherine stared at the tickets. She remembered Tony Ballou had told her someone was selling tickets for the trainmen at a cut price, and the railroad officials could not discover where the leak was.

The two girls stood silently, the tickets on the grass between them; then Emily with a reckless laugh stooped and picking them up thrust them back into her blouse again. Katherine watched her with grave eyes.

“Well?” Emily asked insolently.

Katherine was puzzled what to do. If caught, it would mean a prison sentence for Emily. The railroad was especially bitter on the sale of fake tickets. As it had been more

extensively practiced that season than any previous one, the first culprit caught would certainly be made an example of. Katherine liked Emily. The girl was so winsome; so anxious to please; so cheerful under the most wearing work.

"Emily," she pleaded. "Don't do that. Give those tickets back. There is a special detective up here sent by the railroad. You will surely get caught. Think of the disgrace. The public shame. And your mother and sisters. You are taking awful chances. What is it worth——"

"A dollar a ticket!" Emily answered angrily. "Don't you suppose a dollar looks as good to me as it does to the railroad? I drudge and drudge all day—and what do I get? Work and condescending words of praise sometimes. "No, this is easy money, why should I miss it?"

“Don’t talk so.” Katherine said earnestly. “Emily, you said you work hard—so do all the girls—but the management thinks well of you, so well in fact that you are slated for speedy promotion—”

“And that is such a great thing—” Emily laughed derisively. “The management thinks well of me—indeed! You make me sick with your sanctimonious ways. You! I suppose you’ll tell Ballou about it. Tell-tale! Spy!” Katherine’s eyes flashed.

“You forget yourself, Emily,” she said with dignity, “I do not tell tales, as you know, and I am not a spy. When have I ever told anything I saw? Ask—any of the girls. I have tried to be one of you. Emily, can’t you see the awful risk you are running? It will mean prison for you. Prison, child, and you are very pretty and some man must think you the

sweetest, dearest girl—" Emily thrust Katherine's hands from her.

" Go away, and mind your own business !" she cried angrily. " I can take care of myself. But if you tell the Manager—I'll tell him something about Kittie Casey," with biting emphasis, " that will open his eyes."

" She has seen Smith coming to the bungalow," flashed to Katherine's mind. " What shall I do ? "

In silence she watched Emily hurry away to the helps' quarters.

Dearie pulling at her hand roused her. Why had she lost her nerve ? Why had she not made Emily tell exactly what she knew. How could she save the girl against herself. She must try again.

" Dearie," she said coaxingly to the child, " I want you to stay here with Peter, and pray, lovey, pray hard

for a foolish girl that she won't be naughty."

"Yes," Dearie agreed from her nest in Peter's arms. "Pray hard for naughty girl." Dutifully she said the desired prayer. Praying, to Dearie, was at times merely a matter of courtesy.

Peter listened to Dearie's original interpretation of what a naughty girl must not do, but his thoughts were with Tony Ballou and Ethel Daggett at Sweetwater Brook.

"Gee, I know she'll take cold," he said to himself. "And the Boss is so daffy he'll never notice she only has a thin coat." Peter had much to learn about men in love.

Dearie did not approve of Peter's abstraction. She was used to his undivided attention at all times.

"Play a-re-o-plane," she suggested. "You run and I'll make whirr-whirr-

noise." But Peter did not feel like a flying machine. He could not take his mind off the picture of Ethel in the Manager's arms.

"Gee, I wish I had a girl?" he sighed again. "It must be swell to have some one think you're the whole cheese!" Swiftly he reviewed his uneventful life. No one had ever cared very much for him, except his mother; and her ideas of affection had consisted mainly in cuffing his ears on the slightest pretext, and applying the strap for major offenses. Her motto being, "Spare the rod, spoil the child." "I guess I'll write to the old girl," he said. "She'll go on a bat sure with the shock. Come, kid, up to my room and write to my mother."

"To Muvver," Dearie agreed cheerfully.

Letter writing proved a new and fascinating game. In her perch in

Peter's bed, safely barricaded with pillows, Dearie drew marvelous short-hand on a big piece of brown paper ; while Peter, at the window-sill, with much distorting of face, and great agony of mind, evolved a letter which nearly threw his mother into the predicted " bat." A letter which was read by every mother in Harmony Flats, with varying degrees of envy. A letter which Mrs. Molloy herself read to the unfortunate ones, who had just mislaid their glasses, or whose eyes were feeling weak. A letter which Peter's mother cherished and guarded carefully in the family Bible, besides a pale little wisp of baby hair. A letter which made that portly matron sigh as she gave the rest of the pride of the house of Molloy their supper ; and maybe accounted in a measure for the mildness with which she reprimanded Jimmy, the

youngest, who, seeing the maternal vigilance relaxed, made bold to eat half his sister's cake as well as his own.

"Me boy's a foine lad," she said to herself. "And like his father. God rest his soul." As her mind wandered back to a stile in the ould country, and a wisp of a girl dawdling along waiting for a strapping lad to overtake her, she sighed. "The girls 'll be casting sheep's eyes at me boy soon, bad cess to them," she said angrily, her eyes flashing fire. Jimmy speedily effaced himself. His mother eased her feelings on the unoffending dishes ; and the way she banged them into the water, scoured them round, and slapped them upon the shelf, boded ill for the girl of Peter's dreams.

While Peter was writing his memorable letter Katherine was with Emily

in her room. The girl had looked surprised to see her so soon again, and would not talk. Katherine persisted, however, and under her determined eye Emily gradually weakened, until she burst forth :

“ You’re a great one to preach to me. You liar ! Kittie Casey, indeed, I know who you are. I worked for Mrs. Harley across the street. You’re a swell. What are you doing working up here ? No good I bet. You’re spying. Pokin’ here, and pokin’ there, and tellin’ the Boss. Oh, I’ve watched you. With your sweet ways, hidin’ behind that poor blind baby. And I shouldn’t be a mite surprised if that baby was your own. She calls you Ma, and’s loved you from the start. That’s suspicious ! You’re up here hiding so your folks won’t know, or your swell friends, what you are, Miss Katherine Carew ! ”

Katherine kept her temper with an effort. Angry words rose to her lips, but she bit them back. What good would it do to tell Emily the truth? She would not believe it.

"So you just keep your mouth shut!" Emily continued, passionately, "or I'll tell the Boss who you are. I want to make some money and get a little ahead. This pulling and draggin' is hell. What do you know about pinching and doing without? You with your fine dresses and automobile! Nothin' but slazy goods and cheap marked downs for me and my likes. Don't you suppose we want pretty things? You'll say work for 'em. But I have worked. All my life—and I've never gotten ahead a dollar. This hotel work's killin'. The food's poor, we get little rest, and loaf twice a year for over two months between seasons. How can we get

ahead?" She cried throwing herself on the bed in a paroxysm of weeping. In a moment Katherine was beside her patting the heaving shoulders.

"Tell me, Emily," she asked gently. "Who is he?" Emily wept more violently.

"He's head porter up to the Mansion House," she confided wildly, quite forgetful of everything else but her own grievance. "And the head waitress in the side hall dresses up to kill!" Katherine smiled as she smoothed the girl's rumpled hair.

"If it is only a dress you want, Emily," she said, "I have a real dress in my trunk. I don't know why I brought it up here. Possibly just for this. Come to the bungalow and we will try it on. If it doesn't fit we can easily alter it."

"Is it very pretty?" Emily asked

eagerly, mopping her eyes. Katherine laughed.

“So pretty that I hate to give it to you,” she answered. “I had it made just before I decided to come up here, and I’ve never worn it.” Emily scrambled from the bed.

“And you will give it to me? No kidding?” She asked anxiously. “How much did it cost?”

“Forty-seven dollars,” Katherine said. “And the tickets, Emily?” Emily grew red and her lips trembled.

“I’ll give them back to—well—to the men. Honest to God, I will!” She said earnestly. Dearie’s prayer was being answered.

With hands that trembled with joy Emily fastened the dress about her lithe figure. It was indeed a real dress. The only one Emily had ever worn.

“Dear me,” Katherine said in dis-

may. "I always thought I was slender, but you are—Never mind, let me pin it in place. It won't take half an hour to sew it." So the fitting progressed, until even Emily's critical eyes could discover no flaw.

While Katherine sewed Emily talked about her William and the machinations of the head waitress in the side hall.

"But how can you girls manage to stay out so late?" Katherine asked. "The rule is to be in your rooms by ten-thirty."

"Oh, if you know the ropes it's easy." Emily laughed, craftily. "I'll tell you. Sometimes we get the under steward to let us in by way of the store room—but one night just for spite he kept Rosie and me out all night—Most times we buy passes. They cost twenty-five cents. Mrs. Wood, the housekeeper, you know,

signs a pass for us each time she lets us stay out late, but she's lazy and uses the same passes over and over again, and she never knows how many she has, so the assistant linen girl takes a few every day and sells them to us, we use them, they are returned to the Linen Room, and there you are. One year at the Mansion House the messenger wrote the same hand as the housekeeper and as he is in and out of the Linen Room all the time, he'd lift a few passes, fill them in himself, and sell them. Oh, there's ways enough. Sometimes when we're broke, we climb in by way of the fire escape. We get a barrel and one girl boosts, then she comes in on a real pass." Katherine's eyes opened. What a place a hotel was to be sure. Wheels within wheels.

"But all this is cheating," she remonstrated. "Do you tell it when you go to confession?" Emily blushed.

“Perhaps if we went to church regular we’d be different,” she said wistfully. “But we’re too busy to get off most of the time; and by the end of the season—you get used to most things after you do them often enough. Why, I never touched a thing that wasn’t mine till I went into hotel work—now—I’m only afraid of getting caught sometimes.” Katherine sighed pitifully.

“Here is Peter and Dearie and supper, you are our guest, Emily,” she said brightly. “And the dress fits perfectly,”

“I must hurry and turn down my beds for the night.” Emily said with regret, when the gala supper had been finished. “Miss Carew, I can’t thank you. I’m ashamed of the rotten things I said—” Katherine placed her hand firmly across the girl’s mouth.

“Hush,” she pleaded. “It was all

mistake. You didn't understand. If anyone asks you where you got the dress tell them the truth, say a friend of mine, Miss Carew, gave it to you."

Emily gathered the dress up reverently, and started for the door, Katherine glancing over her shoulder gave an exclamation of fear.

"Wait, Emily," she said hurriedly. "The tickets! Where are they?" Emily turned. Mr. Ballou, Mrs. Wood, and a strange man were close to the bungalow. Emily's face blanched.

"That's the detective," Katherine explained. "Give me the tickets. Quickly!" In terror Emily obeyed. Hastily Katherine concealed them within her own blouse.

"I can't let you," Emily stammered. "If they find them on you"—Katherine silenced her with a gesture.

"They will not search me," she said

positively. "Brace up, child, do not look so guilty."

"Emily," the Manager said, his face very grave, "Mrs. Wood must search you. We have gone over your room. Barry was caught with fake tickets, and he said you were in on the deal." Emily stood, her new dress crushed close to her.

"Must I let them?" she asked Katherine. She nodded.

Reluctantly Mrs. Wood followed Emily into the other room. In a few minutes she returned triumphantly.

"Didn't I tell you none of my girls would do such a thing," she said proudly. "That Barry has been jealous all summer of Emily, and he thought this a fine chance to do her a dirty trick."

The detective was scrutinizing Katherine keenly.

"Perhaps she slipped the tickets to

her friend," he said, indicating Katherine by a nod. Tony Ballou's eyes flashed.

"That is quite sufficient," he said curtly. "Mrs. Wood, Emily is cleared. As for Barry—he shall suffer the full penalty for trying to implicate an innocent woman. Mr. Dowd, we may as well return to the hotel." With a shrug of his shoulders the detective accompanied the Manager.

"That other woman would bear watching," he remarked sotto voce. "She knows where those tickets are."

Indeed Katherine did know, for at that moment she was hastily burning them at the open fireplace. A task accomplished with much anxiety lest some one should come in unexpectedly and catch her.

CHAPTER VII.

JACK SOLVES ALL KATHERINE'S PROBLEMS.

KATHERINE watched the last railroad ticket shrivel up and float away in a puff of smoke. As she rose from her knees and dusted her hands, she said pityingly.

"God help the poor, how can they be good. Their temptations are legion."

Dearie had fallen asleep in the big chair. As Katherine carried her to her room, undressed her and tucked her into bed, she said remorsefully,

"You poor little mite. I never meant to neglect you."

Smith's rap on the door roused her from her musing.

"Ma'am, I want to talk to you," he commenced. Katherine waited. Did this mean more trouble?

"Well?" she asked briefly.

"You've been good to Dearie, and 'fore God, lady, I'm grateful," he said passionately. "But those others, what are they to me? Nothin'. And they are trying to steal Dearie's love away from me. That man down there," pointing to the hotel, "He's going to marry and have children of his own. What does he want with my child?"

"You seem to forget," Katherine interrupted coldly. "You deserted Dearie. Threw her aside, and that man there, as you call him, took her in and cared for her and loved her. You are an ungrateful man." Smith cowered before Katherine's just anger.

"She's my child," he said sullenly.

“Mine! I’ll let no one steal her from me. I was takin’ her to put her to board for the summer, while I worked up here, that day I left her with Mr. Ballou in the railroad station. I wanted her near me—and as I looked at the Boss I knew he’d keep her, and bring her with him. So I left her—but I watched—watched—until they both started for the mountains, and I saw he loved her, and she would be happy. I’ve a home out West and a father and mother still, and if I could only get ahead a bit. They never knew I stole. They think I’m doing well. I used to send them money sometimes. If I had a few hundred dollars,” he said eagerly. “One good scoop would do it.”

“Stop!” Katherine commanded.
“What are you talking about?”

“Nothin’,” the man’s head drooped and he shuffled into Dearie’s room. A

little later Katherine heard him going out the back door.

"Poor man," she sighed wearily, "He is working himself into a dangerous frame of mind. Poor man, he is like Emily, wants to get ahead. Queer how they cannot see that the deficiency lies, not in the rest of the world, but in themselves. I wonder at what point in its development the beneficent microbe of ambition becomes the malignant microbe of discontent." She was still smiling at her whimsical conceit when a tap sounded at the front door. For a moment she hesitated. Could it be possible she was afraid? Of what? Nothing remained of the incriminating railroad tickets but a little fine ash among the other ashes on the hearth.

"Come in," she called sharply. Jack Ballou's broad shoulders were

framed in the doorway. Katherine gasped, then held out her hands.

“Boy, I am glad,” she said softly.

Peter following closely upon Jack Ballou’s heels, whistled and retired hastily into the outer darkness.

“Gee!” he sighed, wistfully, “Another pair. I’ve just gotter get a girl.”

Katherine seated beside Jack on the old-fashioned settle next the fire was smiling up at him with her heart in her eyes.

“I think I knew from the very first you’d come.” She said happily. Jack’s face glowed despite his varicolored eye.

“How could you do it, Kit?” He asked reproachfully. “I’ve been writing you reams, and sending them across the pond to your brother’s London address.” Katherine laughed, her old cheery laugh.

"Won't it be fun reading them—
together," she said gaily. "But Jack,
I am not sure of my eyes yet. The
mists have left, but they may come
back."

"I've a bit of news for you." Jack in-
terrupted. "It isn't generally known,
but Dr. Pau is in a Sanitarium. His
mania was that every one of his
patients was afflicted with blindness.
Perhaps there was some foundation
for his diagnosis in your case, but we
will feel better if we go to the city to-
morrow and consult some one else."

"Thank God!" Katherine cried fer-
vently. "If it was only that. I had
been abusing my eyes shamelessly,
and my nerves were in bad shape.
Think what it would mean, Jack, to
have the fear of perpetual darkness
lifted."

As Jack crushed her hands in his,
Katherine for the first time noticed

his injured eye. He met her stare of amazement with a vivid description of his encounter with Tony the night before, which amused Katherine greatly.

“And you have not been unhappy up here?” He asked anxiously.

“Not a bit.” Katherine answered quickly. “And I have learned so much. I used to think only the rougher element of servants drifted into hotel work; and in choosing Dorothy’s maids, I would never consider for a moment any girl whose only reference was from a hotel. Now I know better. There is a rough element, naturally, but it is the vast minority; and there are so many truly fine characters, Jack, I wish you could know them as I do. They have all been so kind to me, I shall miss them.”

“With me?” Jack asked reproachfully.

"Only for the very first, of course, jealous!" Katherine laughed.

Thankfully she told Jack about Smith's numerous visits. It was such a relief having some one to share her anxieties with her. He listened gravely but agreed that it was the only thing she could have done. Smith's right to his child was indisputable.

"It is no use Tony wanting to keep the child," he said positively. "After he is married to Ethel for a while he won't be so keen about her. And a blind child would be an awful nuisance around all the time." Katherine's grieved face effectually stopped him.

"Kit," he laughed. "You want the child yourself. Confess." Katherine nodded wistfully. "All right then." Jack answered with mock resignation. "She is yours."

“ You dear ! ” Katherine cried rapturously. “ We will divide her with Tony and Ethel.”

“ Fine.” He answered absently. “ What name did you say Smith was working under ? ” Katherine had neglected to say.

“ Oh, I forgot to tell you,” she said, innocently falling into the trap. “ He is Tom Jones at the Mansion House.” Jack smiled to himself. He had the information he wanted.

“ Three hundred dollars, Smith said would set him up. Didn’t he ? Fancy, Kit, the price of one imported dress.”

“ But I have never paid that for a dress.” Katherine remonstrated. “ I would not be so extravagant.” Jack glanced at his watch.

“ I’d better be going, dear,” he said reluctantly. “ If folks see a light here half the night, they’ll think some one is sick.”

Long after Katherine lay in bed, with Dearie nestled close in her arms, she prayed gratefully for the one man in the world, the man who was willing to give her anything she wanted, even the little blind child. Unconsciously she compared his ready acquiescence with Ethel's unwillingness. Perhaps she would not have felt quite so sure, if she could have seen Jack sprinting for the down train to Hopedale; or later as he sat in Smith's room with that excited man. Both men's faces were eager and their heads were very close together.

"Until the day after to-morrow, then!" was Jack Ballou's final injunction.

"You're a good man," Smith stammered as he grasped Jack's hand.

"No, only a wise one," Jack Ballou answered as he returned the man's grip.

He felt not a twinge of remorse as he departed with Katherine for the city on the early morning train. Ethel had come for Dearie, to take her to Hopedale until Katherine's return the next day. Dearie was wildly elated at going visiting, and Peter who acted as her faithful escort, as Ethel did not dare travel in the train with the child alone, was much disturbed at her willingness to leave Peaceful Valley.

"I'm coming down to-night to see the kid," he announced to Ethel on leaving. Ethel smiled in a superior manner.

"Dearie won't be lonely," she replied positively. "But come if you want to." Peter's face had lost its usual happy smile as he returned to the hotel.

"Gee! girls are fickle," he thought. "She'd rather have a new doll than

me." For Dearie had flouted his final embrace with a none too gentle hand.

Ethel, Tony Ballou and Dearie were eagerly waiting for Jack and Katherine at the bungalow on their return from the city. Katherine's face was radiant, so was Jack's, but his smile had an abstracted air, and his hand wandered often to his breast-pocket.

"I am all well," Katherine cried jubilantly as she hugged Dearie. "Dr. Oxford says I never would have been really blind; but that probably the life up here cured me quicker than any other could have done." Ethel smiled gaily through her tears.

"It was that blessed child that cured you, her prayers!" She declared vehemently. "Jack, you should want to provide for Dearie's future even more than Tony." Jack smiled grimly.

"Perhaps I shall provide for her future," he answered gravely. "You never can tell." Katherine patted his arm.

"You always were a dear, Jack," she said rapturously. Jack winced and gazed into the forest with unseeing eyes.

Supper was served at the bungalow, and a happy quartette spent a very merry evening until Katherine announced severely that it was long past Dearie's bedtime. Ethel and Tony Ballou declared their intention of walking part way to Hopedale, and having the motor overtake them in time to arrive at the Mansion House in strictly conventional style.

While Katherine put Dearie to bed Jack strolled round the bungalow smoking; and if he did pause over long at the end of the grove nobody saw him, but when he re-entered the

house his hand had ceased to wander to his breast-pocket.

After Dearie slept, Jack coaxed Katherine to wrap up warm and sit out on the porch to watch the moon for a while. This Katherine was only too willing to do, as she wished to leave the field clear for Smith in case he might decide to pay Dearie a visit.

The moon proved alluring, Jack's conversation held her attention, and she failed to hear the back door open, and shortly afterwards close. Not so Jack, however, and if he moved a trifle closer to her as the stealthy steps died away in the distance, Katherine did not for a moment guess the mixed emotions of the man at her side.

* * * * *

The sharp, shrill toot of the engine at the trestle sounded again, and again

in quick succession. Katherine shivered.

"Somebody was foolish and tried to cross the trestle at the wrong time," she said uneasily. "But Smith did not come to-night, so I have no real cause for worry." Jack's tongue refused to move.

"Does—does Smith use the trestle?" he asked with a gasp.

"Yes, when he does not hook a freight, as he calls it. To-night the freight schedule has been reversed to give a clear track to the President's special, Peter was telling me." Katherine answered.

Jack half rose to his feet, then sank back again. How could he tell Katherine that Smith and Dearie were on the trestle when the President's train —It was horrible—And it was all his fault. If he had not wished to get rid of the child, if he had not conspired

with Smith, Dearie would be safely sleeping in her little white bed instead—" Jack closed his eyes and tried to pray.

"Listen!" Katherine said eagerly. "If in a minute the train whistles for the Peaceful Valley station we will know that nothing is wrong at the bridge, and that they did not have to stop."

"Toot—toot—toot—toot!" came the strident tones, somewhat muffled by the distance; but to Jack Ballou's ears it was the sweetest music in the world. His clenched hands relaxed, and he suddenly felt faint and weak. The minute and a half had been hours of torture to him.

Excited voices were coming up the path. Peter and the clerk Robinson reached the bungalow porch first.

"Dearie?" they cried. Jack sprang forward.

“What?” he demanded, hoarsely. Peter’s eager voice quickly reassured him.

“The conductor on the President’s train told the stationmaster at Peaceful Valley, and he telephoned us, that they nearly ran over a man and kid on the trestle, and he said it was our Dearie.”

“Our Dearie?” Katherine cried in alarm. “No, no, he cannot have stolen her.”

Eagerly they crowded into the little house. Anxiously Katherine and Peter searched everywhere, for the bed was empty and Dearie’s clothes were gone.

“She took the doll,” Peter announced with a suspicious moisture in his eyes. “And left the jumping-jack I made her,” he added dolefully.

Katherine was kneeling beside the

child's bed, her face buried in her hands praying. Jack motioned the men back.

"Telephone Mr. Ballou at Hopedale," he said gravely. "The man was Dearie's father, and had a perfect right to her—but we would rather he had taken her in a less spectacular manner."

Wonderingly the group returned to the hotel.

"Comfort me!" Katherine sobbed, coming to Jack with outstretched hands. "I loved her so."

Tony Ballou and Ethel were greatly upset; and Tony Ballou at least vowed vengeance upon the hapless Smith. Jack alone stood up for the absent man, stoutly declaring that if Dearie had been his child no one should have taken her from him.

Messengers were sent in all directions, the telephone and telegraph

kept busy, but no trace of the missing man and child was found.

Perhaps, if he had wanted to, a certain chum of Jack Ballou could have thrown some light on the mystery.

For, on the night of Dearie's disappearance he might have been seen, in his high-power touring car, with a man and a little girl and a doll as passengers, breaking all records towards the city two hundred miles away. And one little item in Jack Ballou's bank book, "Paid Out \$300." would probably have completed the solution.

The search was kept up for a week, then gradually dwindled down until no one but Katherine and Tony Ballou really grieved for the lost child.

Katherine was staying with Ethel and her Aunt at the Mansion House now, and the bungalow on the hillside was closed.

The season in the mountains was nearly over; only a few belated excursionists and ardent lovers of nature still keeping the hotels open.

The mountain sides were aflame with the glories of the autumnal foliage; the air as invigorating as wine; one day in late September, Tony Ballou, Ethel, Jack, and Katherine on returning from a glorious tramp across the valley, were met by Peter with a telegram for Jack.

With a smile half amused, half shamed-faced he handed it to Katherine, who was toying with the ring that he had slipped upon her finger only a few hours before.

“Read it,” he said, and Katherine read aloud,

“Dearie and I are safe and happy
in God’s country again.

TOM SMITH.”

“But why did he write to you?” Katherine protested. “The ungrateful man. You did the least for Dearie of all of us.” But Jack Ballou, being a man wise in his generation, held his peace.

THE END.

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